THE SEVEN-FOLD GIFT

By WM. F. ROBISON, S.J.

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THE SEVEN-FOLD GIFT

A Study of The Seven Sacraments

BY

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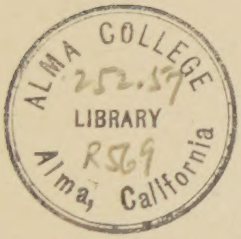

B. HERDER BOOK CO.
17 South Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.
and
68 Great Russell St., London, W. C.
1922

1789

IMPRIMI POTEST

Sti. Ludovici, die 1. Maii, 1922.
F. X. McMenamy, S. J.,
Praepositus Provincialis
Prov. Missour.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 23. Maii, 1922.
F. G. Holweck,
Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 25. Maii, 1922.
✠*Joannes J. Glennon,*
Archiepiscopus
Sti. Ludovici

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TO
MY FRIENDS

FOREWORD

Thanks to the war, the custom of applying initial titles to persons and things has become so common that it is almost a mannerism. From A. E. F. down to C. O., and from that down to M. P. the term is used.

If this usage were to be adopted for the present work, we might call these pages "C. C. C."(College Church Conferences), since that would explain their origin and their nature. They were given in St. Francis Xavier ("College") Church as a series of Lenten lectures. They are not, however, given to the public as mere lectures, considered as sermons: they form a brief treatise on a very important subject. The form of direct, personal appeal has been left unchanged for the same reason which prompted me to retain that form in the volumes which have already appeared in print.

The preceding Volumes *(The Bedrock of Belief, "His Only Son," Christ's Master-*

piece) dwelt first of all upon the necessity of the profession of religion, as based on man's position as a creature; they next established the claim of Christianity as the religion to be professed; and finally they made good the right of the Catholic Church to the allegiance of all, as being Christianity in the concrete.

The most obvious power of the Catholic Church is that of teaching authoritatively what the Saviour taught and of ruling the souls of men so as to bring them to the salvation achieved by the Redeemer of mankind. But, besides the mission of unfailingly and infallibly teaching all men the revelation of Jesus Christ and of ruling them unto salvation, she has the stupendous power of leading them to holiness by the means left in her hands and heart by her divine Founder.

Seven-fold is the stream which brings to God's children the water that springeth up to life everlasting—the seven-fold stream of the Sacraments, which are a seven-fold gift of love. This work treats of the Sacraments.

The standard theological sources have been drawn on, to all of which due acknowledgment is hereby given. The thoughts presented in the following pages are not new, and do not claim to be; but they are true. In their truth they should lead to a deeper appreciation of God's gifts to men, to a more grateful prizing of their supereminent sublimity, and to a more loving use of these means of drawing nearer to Him.

It is in the hope of aiding at least some few to the better realization of these precious results that the present work is offered to all who love Christ.

WILLIAM F. ROBISON, S. J., PH. D.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY
Easter, 1922.

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THE SEVEN-FOLD GIFT

CHAPTER I

THE GATE TO LIFE

Outline of considerations. What sacraments are. Baptism the Gate to Life.—Institution. False ideas. The truth. Promise of the Baptist: Christ's words: New Testament references.—Effects: regeneration unto life; initiation into sanctity of God; incorporation in mystic Christ.—Consequences: necessity for salvation; substitutes, namely, baptism of blood and baptism of desire. Seal of Baptism. Other consequences: folly of indifferentism; malice of sin; need of regard for fellows.

Penance and prayer are strange words to-day in the ears of many. Penance is looked upon as a foolish relic of a worn-out, superstitious age and as an insult to the greatness of a humanity which is sufficient for itself. Prayer is considered as the childish nonsense of infancy, to be cast aside on coming to the stature of fully developed powers, nay, to be despised as the unworthy lowering of a nature that is worshipped.

Yet, strange as these words may sound in the ears of the thoughtless and the foolish, they are the expression of true wisdom. For, the greatness of man requires self-restraint and self-denial, or it sinks beneath the level of the beast; it must humble itself in the lowliness of prayer, or it falls into the degradation of senseless pride. Penance and prayer go hand in hand to keep us good and make us better, to keep us great and make us nobler.

Yes, these two must have place in our lives at all times, although their exercise is called for with more insistent necessity at special periods. And with the faithful practice of prayer, and forming part of it, there must be found serious reflection upon the truths of salvation which will help us on to greater uprightness. We must feed our souls with truth and holiness, just as we conserve our bodily strength by material sustenance: "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." [1]

Our Blessed Lord led His mortal life and

[1] Matt. iv, 4; Deut. viii, 3.

made His revelation and paid the price of our redemption on the bloody gibbet of the cross. Safeguarding that revelation, He placed it in the hands of His chosen ones, to whom He gave the mission of teaching and sanctifying and ruling in the realm of the spirit all who would have part with Him. Yes, the lessons of His teachings were to be brought home to the souls of those who would come after Him until the end of time; and this sacred deposit He placed in the hands of His Church. But, besides all this, the fruits of His redemption too were to be applied to the souls of men; and, apart from the mysterious ways which He reserved to His omnipotence, this was to be done through the great, broad, deep streams of grace, borne by the Sacraments which He also gave to His Spouse.

Since the deeper knowledge of these channels of aid divine to our faltering weakness will be of no little advantage, I propose to consider them with what clearness and force and helpfulness I can. It is not my intention to treat the subject-matter of the sacraments in a directly controversial way;

yet most frequently the best of controversy is to be found in candid exposition, since truth conquers in the end. Rather my plan is to assist to a better understanding and a deeper esteem of these means of grace, to a correspondingly greater love for the dear Lord who gave them to the world, and to a more whole-souled loyalty of service towards Him whose love deserves so much from us. The Seven Sacraments of the Church, then, form the subject-matter of what follows.

Of course, we recall quite well what a sacrament is. That we learned long ago, perhaps at mother's knee, surely in the days of our first acquaintance with the Catechism. So, we know that a sacrament is the outward sign instituted by Christ to confer grace. It is a sacred rite which comes to us from Christ, bearing the heaven-blessed, love-freighted sweetness of His strength and affection.

Some outward, sensible sign has been established and instituted by the Saviour of mankind as a permanent symbol of the grace which is conferred by it through the linking to it of the power of His almightiness and

the merits of His sorrow-drenched Passion. Of itself the external, visible rite would have no power to uplift the soul of man; but when, through the institution of the Master, it is used by Him in the person of His ministers, it is really His action and is filled with the efficacy of His mightiness. What St. Augustine says so pointedly of Baptism, is true of all the sacraments: "Let Peter baptize, it is He (Christ) who baptizes: let Paul baptize, it is He who baptizes: let Judas baptize, it is He who baptizes."[1] "He (Christ) it is who baptizes in the Holy Ghost, nor . . . has He now ceased to baptize, but still yet does He do it, not by the ministry of His body, but by the invisible operation of His majesty."[2] Yes, it is all Christ's action; it is His application of His merits to the soul through the religious rite instituted by Him.

Such is a sacrament. There are seven of these sacred means of grace, and the first of them is Baptism, which may rightly be termed the Gate to Life.

[1] *Tract. 6 in Joannem* n. 7.
[2] Contra litt. Petil. l. 3, c. 49, n. 59.

If we were to listen to the self-satisfied assertions of some of the modern historians of religion, we might, as they do, see no more in Christian Baptism than a form of initiation into the Christian religion, altogether similar to many other initiatory rites of various religions of the past. The syncretism of our age delights in tracing resemblances between these rites and in drawing wonderful (!) conclusions: it reduces everything to categories and bewilders the simple with its show of marvelous erudition. We find some present-day prophets, inspired not from on high, who do not hesitate to foretell the day when Christianity, placed in the museums of worn-out religions and ticketed like a royal mummy, will represent no more than one of the religious burgeonings that once occupied the dreams of mankind and then passed away forever.

Such a position may be easily comprehended, if we look at the starting-point of those who uphold it—a starting-point which makes no account of God and of His supernatural dealings with men. But, thank God! such a position will not do for us.

For, we see in Christ's religion the only way to salvation for a ruined race; in the person of Christ, the object of a whole-souled, loving adoration; and in the Baptism of Christ, the sign given by Him to His own, the gate to life, fashioned by the Master of life. And it is we, and not the false prophets, who are right. The first two points, about the religion which has come from Him and about the dignity of His sacred Person, have been solidly established elsewhere:[1] the third, about His Baptism, must occupy us now. And Baptism *is* His work, His sign, the gateway fashioned by Him.

When our Blessed Lord began to announce His message of glad-tidings, His messenger, His "angel"[2] had gone before Him preparing the way, "a voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."[3] St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of the Messiah, had lived his penitential life of preparation for his work. He had grown into the mightiness of soul which was to rebuke with

[1] Cf. *Christ's Masterpiece* and *"His Only Son."*
[2] Mal. iii, 1.
[3] Mark i, 3; Isa. xl, 3.

words of power the vile profligacy of a luxurious race and the mean hypocrisy of avaricious double-dealers. He had fed his soul on communings with God and on the thought of the majesty of Him who was to be sent; and whilst he clothed his body in camel's hair, girded it with a leather girdle, and fed it with locusts and wild honey, he advanced to the stature of soul which was that of a prophet—aye, "and more than a prophet." [1]

Out into the wilderness his clarion voice called the throngs of men. The soldiers and the publicans and the public sinners—yes, and the Pharisees of the law came out into the bleakness of the desert; and as he scourged their vices with tongue of fire, he preached to them "the baptism of penance for the remission of sins." [2] It was all a preparation for the work of Him who was to come, of his Master—and John told his hearers so. "There cometh after me one greater than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I have baptized you with water, but he shall bap-

[1] Matt. xi, 9.
[2] Luke iii, 3.

tize you with the Holy Ghost."[1] Yes, the Lord was to have His own Baptism, which was to be not only in water, as John's was unto the arousing of penance, but in water and the Holy Ghost unto the sealing of His own and the consecration of their souls and the pouring forth of the spirit of God.[2]

Lucidly clear and very striking are the words of the Evangelist, St. John, as he recounts for us the incident of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to the Master by night and who became the Master's disciple, though secretly for fear of the Jews: "Amen, Amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Amen, Amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Wonder not that I say to thee, you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh or

[1] Mark i, 7, 8.
[2] Cf. Acts xix, 4, 5.

whither he goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."[1] As we listen to our Savior, we cannot but be struck by the supreme and masterful assurance with which He speaks in words clear as light and strong as life, even as we are touched by the naïve ignorance of the master in Israel, whose good faith makes him a disciple of the Lord and who is not disconcerted by the sublimity of the Master's teaching.

After the dear Lord in the excess of love had paid to the justice of God the price of our ransom and had bought us back from destruction by the price of the bloody tragedy of Calvary; when he had so often communed with His dear ones during the mysterious, love-flooded days which followed His resurrection, ere He went into His Father's House He gave His commission to those whom He had chosen and instructed and trained and fostered and who were to carry His benedictions to the sons of men till time should be no more. As St. Matthew records the event, the Savior said to His Apostles: "Going therefore teach ye

[1] John iii, 3ff.

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."[1] And St. Mark adds these other words of the Christ: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."[2] St. Luke does not forget the message of "penance and remission of sin;"[3] and though in his gospel, he does not speak explicitly of Baptism, still, if we turn to the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, we have his narrative about the Apostles preaching and bestowing Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus.[4]

Thus, from the most primitive of Christian documents, the Magna Charta of our Christian liberty, we see Christ's sacred design of binding to the institution of Baptism the work of evangelization, which He had inaugurated in His hollowed Person and which was to be carried on by His chosen ones.

In the face of these clear manifestations

[1] Matt. xxviii, 19.
[2] Mark xvi, 16.
[3] Luke xxiv, 47.
[4] Cf. Acts ii, 38, 41; viii, 12; x, 48; xviii, 8.

of truth, human and divine, why will some insist, as they do, upon the vagaries of preconceived opinions to the detriment of truth? Why will they, for reasons which are worse than vain, reject the charter of liberty itself? Why will others turn away in disdain from the words of Christ risen from the dead, because they will not have a Jesus who has conquered death? Why will they still have the effrontery to call themselves Christians, even whilst they deny the root-principle of Christianity? Why will they keep out of their own lives and try to tear out of the hearts of sorrowing mankind the faith in a Redeemer who redeems and who applies the fruits of that redemption to His ransomed ones? Why will they choose death when they might have life?

Let us, indeed, not imitate the self-sufficiency of the proud Pharisee and thank God that we are not as other men. Or rather, we may thank God that we are not like these other men, who are adrift on the wild sea of ignorance or are wandering in the arid desert of human pride, which is

deadly even though it be unconscious. No, God be praised! we are not like them, not because of any excellence of our own, but because the goodness of God has saved us from our weakness and our helplessness. Christ's light has shone in the darkness, and by the mercy of God we have not loved the darkness more than the light. The Christ saw in the bosom of the Father all that He taught to the sons of men: He has taught that truth, and—thanks to His love!—we have hearkened to His sacred revelation. And that revelation tells of His institution of His Baptism.

This Baptism, then, is Christ's sacrament; it is the rite of the washing of water with the prescribed form of words; it was instituted by Him to confer the grace of God, to do away with original sin and with any actual sins which may be upon the conscience of the recipient at the time it is conferred; it is "the sacrament of regeneration by water in the word;" [1] it is the Gate to Life.

And what of its effects? Some of these

[1] Catech. Rom. P. 2, c. 2, n. 5.

have just been enumerated; but a more careful consideration will be of advantage. Of all the concepts of the Baptism the first in dignity, as in depth and simplicity, is the one which is prominent in the words of the Savior when He spoke to Nicodemus of the "baptism of water and the Holy Ghost." "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"[1] said the Master. Baptism, then, which is the gateway to life, is a second birth according to the Spirit.

Small wonder, if in the splendor of the light divine of this revelation our poor little minds should be dazzled as by a lightning flash. It is only when we clasp fast the truth spoken by the Incarnate Word that we begin to see amidst the brightness. Born again into the life of the Spirit of God! Says St. Paul: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, (Father)."[2] "You are all the children of God by faith, in

[1] John iii, 5.
[2] Rom. viii, 15.

Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ."[1] "He saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost; whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior: that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to the hope, of life everlasting."[2] And so by Baptism we live with the true life, which is the life of God; we are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Christ, the heirs of God and coheirs with the Only-Begotten of the Father: for, again says St. Paul, "But you" (who were stained with the monstrous malice of transgression) "are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."[3]

Such is the first concept of Baptism as derived from the words of the Master; such too is the first thought of the eagle spirit of St. Paul. Yet the Apostle soars even higher in the sublimity of his conception of Christ's

[1] Gal. iii, 26, 27.
[2] Tit. iii, 5-7.
[3] I Cor. vi, 11.

Baptism and of its effects. The Christ is the author of our redemption and the source of our sanctification; and it is by His fearful death upon the cross that He has worked out that redemption and unsealed the streams of that sanctification. Now, the Baptism by which the fruits of that redemption and the glories of that sanctification are communicated to us is, to the inspired mind of Paul, a mystic death, through which we are associated with Christ in the crowning act of His divine tragedy.[1]

By Baptism we are crucified with Christ;[2] we are buried with Christ.[3] But this crucified death brings forth life;[4] this burial gives place to the resurrection of His ransomed ones,[5] who are incorporated into His mystic body.[6] And—be it noted well—the proximate cause of this death and resurrection, of this intimate union of the members in one mystic body, is always Baptism, which to Paul is ever an introduction to the

[1] Cf. Rom. vi, 3ff.
[2] Cf. Id. ib.
[3] Cf. Col. ii, 12.
[4] Cf. Rom. iii, 4.
[5] Cf. Col. ii, 12.
[6] Cf. I Cor. xii, 27; Col. i, 17.

divine life of God and an initiation into the sanctity of the Most High. This is the hidden grace of the sacrament.

Once more, though the images of St. Paul may not always be clear to the groping human understanding, they are always sublime; and this much is ever clear, that the Baptism of Christ is the gate to life by our rebirth in God and by our incorporation into the mystic Christ. Of this mystic Christ the head is the Incarnate Word, the Victim-Priest of Calvary; and we who have received the regeneration of Baptism are the members, drawing from the head unity, normal increase, and vital influence.[1] An overpowering thought! Yet all this is not mere dreaming; it is not mere metaphor or fancy: it is not a fiction without fact. It is a grand reality, true with the truth of God.

And the consequences of these truths are as momentous as the truths themselves are overwhelming in their sublimity. The mystic body of Christ is the Church of Christ; and our incorporation with Christ is the grand principle of the unity of that Church

[1] Cf. *Christ's Masterpiece* pp. 181–187.

and the fundamental reason of the urgency of entrance into it by Baptism. One only head must have one only body. Otherwise a monster is the result, and not the beauty all heavenly, which awakened the glowing enthusiasm of St. Paul to lyric flights. As the individual, personal Christ is and can be but one, so too the mystic Christ is and can be but one. "(Be) careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." [1]

Yes, one body, which is the Church: one Baptism, which is its door. With these words of truth divine ringing in its ears, why does not this old world of ours hearken? Has it gone mad? Has "reason fled to brutish beasts" and have "men lost their reason?" One Church and one Baptism! When will men see the light?

If God had left men to go their way to wilful damnation without the help of His

[1] Ephes. iv, 3–6.

loving mercy to undo the work of human folly, it might make little difference whether men rushed to perdition by one route or by another, except for the deeper depths of divine offense, and the deeper depths of human misery within the abyss of doom; and men might in the recklessness of sinful despair hurl their defiant cry back into the face of a closed heaven, and might say that religion is a matter of supreme indifference. But now! If, in the event of an assured possibility of escaping from the terrible tide of evil which was sweeping away a race, the loving-kindness of God had formed some plan of reconcilation other than that of saving us by condign satisfaction through His only Son, men might vaunt the semblance of an excuse for turning their eyes away from the Christ. But now! If the Savior Himself had made no provision for the application of His redemption to our perishing souls; if He had not staked out the way which leads to the Father's home, men might imagine with some show of reason that one religion is as good as another, and might prate about all ways lead-

ing to the same resting-place and about all service being the service of the Lord and Father of all. But now!

No, No! Christ's way is the only way. "One body . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism"![1] To be saved men must have part with Jesus: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."[2] And to have part with Jesus men must have part in His Baptism, which is the sacrament of regeneration and which joins men to Him as it incorporates them into His Church. "Unless a man be born again of the water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[3]

It is in His Church and by His Church that the Christ sanctifies those whom He has bought back from death at the price of His blood. The joys of eternal bliss in the mansions of the Father will never be for those who through their own fault have not passed through Baptism, the gate of life;

[1] Ephes. iv, 4, 5.
[2] Acts iv. 12.
[3] John iii, 5.

just as naught but the burning shame of deserters will remain for those who have turned their back upon the Christ, as they tore themselves from His mystical body, the Church. If men will not enter the Ark of salvation by its open door, they can look for no other fate than that of destruction in the swirling waters without, choking, strangling, dragged down into the black depths of a death that knows no dying.

Only in the face of the impossibility of entering by this door, and hence in the absence of culpability, can a man come to heaven without this "laver of water in the word of life."[1] Then, and only then, he may be saved through the extraordinary Providence of God, who will never desert one who does all that lies in his power. If I may be allowed the paradox, such a one is impossibly saved by the almighty love of God, since, all upright of soul though he was, the blind wanderer could not see the light and could not find the one and only way which leads home. Then, and only then, can the Baptism of water, the real

[1] Ephes. v, 26.

sacrament of Baptism, be supplied by the baptism of blood or the baptism of desire.

From the beginnings of the Church there has been current the belief, founded on the words of Christ Himself, that those who for the Lord have suffered death or torments equivalent to death have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb,[1] even though the waters of Baptism have not laved their souls. This immolation for the Christ is called the baptism of blood. It derives its name from the words the Savior spoke to the sons of Zebedee, when He referred to His own blood-stained sacrifice: "Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of: or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized? But they say to him: We can. And Jesus saith to them: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of; and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized you shall be baptized."[2] Again, speaking of His Passion, He said: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am

[1] Apoc. vii, 14.
[2] Mark x, 38, 39.

I straitened until it be accomplished?"[1] And He promised that after the fight His champions should be with Him in everlasting victory: "Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."[2] From these words of Jesus Christ, then, it is manifest that he who sheds his blood for Christ, even though he be not baptized with the Baptism of water, shall have part with the Savior in His glory.

So too, according to Mother Church's received teaching, based upon the words of her Founder, he who, when death comes, loves God with the love of charity or whose heart is breaking with the sorrow of perfect contrition for sin, shall be with God forever. Even if a man has never heard of the Church of Christ or of the Baptism which is the door to the Church and the gateway to life, if he does what lies in his power and keeps the law of God as he knows

[1] Luke xii, 50.
[2] Matt. x, 32, 33.

it; if, through the mysterious ways of God's extraordinary Providence, which it is not ours to trace or even to surmise, he arrives at faith in the supernatural revelation of God, and if, through the sweet urging of grace which touches and draws him, he gives himself to the service and love of God—the reign of grace is established in his soul. Then the sonship of God by divine adoption is his, even though Baptism has not yet, and never does, set its seal thereon.

Heaven knows, we should not envy the lot of such a one, as we may have heard some misguided souls do. What though such a one does find salvation, still is he to be deeply pitied; for he is fed only with the crumbs which fall from the Master's table, at which are seated the children of the Kingdom: he is warmed only by some feeble rays, which are like strayed beams from the sun of love, whilst we are basking in the full warmth and splendor of its unclouded glory. Poor starving wanderer on the way homeward! Yet God's special Providence will lead him home at last: for the Christ has said: "He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father

and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. . . . If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him."[1] And St. John, who knew so well the secrets of the love of the Master on whose breast he had leaned and heard the throbbings of the Sacred Heart, says: "Every one that loveth God, is *born* of God, and knoweth God."[2]

It is evident, then, that such as have made the supreme sacrifice for loyalty to their Lord, as well as such as are blessed with the charity towards God and with the sanctifying grace which is the seed of life everlasting are God's own. Yet it is Baptism which sets its seal upon Christ's members. It is this seal of Baptism which is the last thing to which I wish to refer briefly.

Our incorporation with Christ through Baptism brings with it an indelible spiritual character, a spiritual seal, which likens us to Christ and remains upon our soul forevermore unto the eternal glory of the

[1] John xiv, 21, 23.
[2] John iv, 7.

faithful followers of the Crucified, unto the endless and undying shame of the traitors who have deserted His sacred cause. It is a seal of similarity, which marks us off as Christ's own, as members of His family, as brothers and sisters of the Only-Begotten of God. Because of this sacred character we are fit for the valid reception of other sacraments; because of this, Baptism itself, once validly administered, can never be repeated.

Such, then, is Baptism and such its transcendent greatness; such, the effects which it produces in the souls of those who are privileged to enter through this gate of life. God grant that these considerations may have made us understand it somewhat better and value it more highly!

The consequences of the truths which we have dwelt upon have been already partly pointed out; yet a few others may well be touched upon for our souls' good. First and foremost, as regards the big world of men and women, there is the great truth, written large across the heaven of God's revelation and written there by the hand of

God Himself, condemning the rampant indifferentism of to-day. It is not a matter of indifference whether a man embraces and professes a religion or not; and it is not left to the whim of his own sweet will to determine what religion it shall be. There is but one way to the Father's home—the way traced by the Christ: there is but one Church, which is His mystic body—and as we value our salvation, we must seek for it, if we have it not, and we must cling to it as the ark of salvation, if we are in it.

Again, as to ourselves, we must guard our Baptism and the sanctifying grace of which it made us partakers. We have received the robe of innocence, and we must "keep it white," so as to merit the reward of which it made us heirs. We must avoid sin, cost what it may in the line of sacrifice and self-denial. Sin? "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid!"[1] Yes truly, God forbid! not only because all sin is a degrada-

[1] I Cor. vi, 15.

tion of humanity; not only because it brings with it the doom to forfeiture of endless joys and to damnation unto despairing torments; not only because it dishonors the nature which in Christ Jesus has been raised to the throne of the Divinity; but also because it is a defilement of the body of the mystic Christ, which in the designs of God should be pure and unspotted without wrinkle or blemish.[1]

And as for our fellows, the realization of the glories that come from Baptism should affect our dealings with them. Shall we hate them? Shall we injure them? Shall we drag them down to defilement, as we make them the object of our unworthy whims, the sport of our evil longings, the toy of our hot-blooded passions? Shall we use them as mere things for our convenience or crush them to despair, as we mount on their mangled bodies and broken hearts to comfort and wealth? Or at least shall we pass them by in their sorrow and helplessness, neglecting, if not scorning, the miseries of body and soul that are a very death in life?

[1] Cf. Ephes. v, 27.

Never that! Never that! They too are, at least by destiny, if not in fact, the members of Christ.

The realization of this should foster a real, effective charity, before whose efforts for the material and spiritual uplifting of these the least of Christ's brethren the strivings of mere philanthropy will appear weak and insignificant. The Church, the Spouse of Christ, holds this realization to her heart of hearts; and this is the explanation of her big, deep, wide charity for all men, which is vaster than all the philanthropy of the world. May this same realization take hold of our souls! It will be our encouragement in busying ourselves, according to our opportunities and our abilities, with works for the bodily and spiritual betterment of our less fortunate brethren, and especially of those members of Christ, who are the outcasts of the world, the flotsam and jetsam on the shores of humanity.

Let us lift up our eyes and our hearts to the height of our true greatness, unto the heritage into which we entered when we

passed through the Gate of Life! We are the brothers and sisters of Saints, yes, of the Holy One of God: we are the children of the Most High. And as we advance in our earthly pilgrimage towards the larger life in our Father's home, let us by our honest, earnest, whole-hearted efforts, aided by the all-powerful grace of God, to which we have an undoubted claim, since we were sanctified in Baptism—let us, I say, be greater than the littleness of self, nobler than the vileness of transgression, stronger than a pagan world with all its allurements; for we have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER II

THE SOLDIER'S SEALING

What Confirmation is. How administered.—Institution: Proof from Church's definition; from argument of prescription (Oriental churches, Eastern heretics); from Fathers' testimony; from record of gospel and Acts.—Effects: indelible character impressed; strengthening for war; prototype in Pentecost (Apostles before and after).—Applications: our need of sacrament for purity of faith; for holiness of life in commercial relations, in social environment, in individual selves.

When a child is born into this world, the little one has indeed the breath of life; but it needs care and help and strengthening, so that it may grow to the full stature of manhood. And if, as was the case in older days gone by, the career of the man was to be that of a warrior, then even from the days of boyhood there were exercises which made for proficiency in the use of arms and for strength to bear fatigue and hardship. After many longings and many trials the day came at long last when the young man

was enrolled in the ranks of the fighters, or when, if he was one of the nobler ones and marked out for greatness, the ceremonies of chivalric initiation were performed, in which he was dubbed a knight, belted with the sword, and sent forth to battle for high emprises. Fighting was ahead: war called to the soldier with its iron voice.

There is a parallel between this and the life of the spirit. By Baptism we pass through the gate of life; we are born again and unto the higher life of God; we are incorporated into the mystic body of Christ, as we are made members of His one and only Church, with heaven before us as our heritage and brotherhood with Christ as our present glory; we are marked with the likeness of family resemblance to Christ our Lord and are made capable of participation in the sacred rites of the Church.

Yet, life is ahead—and for all, men and women alike, young and old indifferently, that life is not a peaceful pilgrimage to another land. It is, on the contrary, a fierce fight, a ceaseless warfare in the face of the foe: and it is the sweet Prince of peace Him-

self who has told us so. "I came," says He, "not to send peace, but the sword."[1] Hence, in these lives of ours there is place for the strengthening of the spirit unto the brave profession of faith and unto the valiant proof of loyalty amidst the din and dust and blood of battle. Therefore, as a complement of Baptism, and in the early ages of the Church administered in connection with it, the love of our good Lord has given us the Sacrament of Confirmation. "Baptism saves in peace: Confirmation arms for war."[2]

A sacrament, as we know, is an outward sign or rite instituted by Christ for the conferring of grace. Confirmation is a sacrament. It is the sacrament by which those who are baptized are strengthened for the constant and brave profession of the Christian faith; and it is conferred by the unction of chrism on the forehead, with the prescribed form of words. The bishop signs the brow with the sacred cross of the Master and says: "I sign thee with the sign of the

[1] Matt. x, 34.
[2] Pesch. *Praelect. Dogm.* VI, n. 490.

cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."[1] Simple, yet solemn rite! It is so soon ended and so little heeded by the thoughtless. Yes, the old world rolls on as before and no notice is paid by the hurrying throngs of men; but another miracle of God's love has been wrought, by the administration of another sacrament of Jesus Christ.

For, in spite of the denial of almost all those who are not within the fold of the Catholic Church, Confirmation *is* one of Christ's sacraments. Yet, many deny this truth. According to most of our separated brethren Confirmation is nothing more than a public profession of faith, made by the individual before the Church's minister—a useful ceremony, a holy profession, but not a sacramental rite ordained by Christ our Lord. Almost all non-Catholics limit the number of sacraments to two, namely, Baptism and "The Supper," and admit Confirmation only in the sense just referred

[1] Eugenius IV, *Decret. pro Armen.*—Denzinger, *Enchiridion* n. 697.

to. But they are wrong: it is a sacrament.

Of course, the final word for Catholics is that which comes from the mouth of Christ's Spouse, whose infallible pronouncement utters anathema against those who deny that Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments, of which Jesus Christ is the Author.[1] Yet the position of Holy Church in safeguarding the sacred character of this institution of the Savior—quite apart from the infallibility guaranteed to her by her Founder—is so solidly sustained by the verdict of history, that it is a wonder how even those who are not hers can venture to dissent from her here.

For, from the twelfth century on to the so-called Reformation throughout the whole Christian world there was no doubt expressed about the existence of the seven sacraments, of which Confirmation is one. Moreover, as the great theologian Suarez remarks very appositely, this unanimous consent has not been anything new in the Church; on the contrary, it is so old, that, retracing past times back to Christ Himself,

[1] Conc. Trid., sess. VII, can. 1.—Denz. n. 844.

no beginning of it can be discovered either in any council or in any papal decree. This unanimous consent about Confirmation is, then, a sign that the rite has come to us from the Christ through the Apostles and their successors.[1]

It will be well to bear this reason in mind, especially since there will be occasion to refer to it in other connections. It is the "nine points of the law" which belong to "possession." It is an entirely valid method of argumentation. From the constant and universal consent of the Christian world in regard to a doctrine in question we rightly conclude to Apostolic teaching (and therefore to Christ's teaching), not only because of the heaven-pledged infallibility of the Church, but also because even historically it cannot be shown when such a doctrine was introduced as new, and because all such attempts are in direct contradiction with facts.

Going back still farther, the truth about Confirmation is again confirmed by the position of the Oriental schismatical churches.

[1] Cf. Suarez, In 3, q. 65, a. 1, n. 4.

From the ninth century these bodies cut themselves away from the Church in the disastrous pride of schism, which grew into hatred, deep and strong and bitter. They clung tenaciously to their customs and to their peculiar distortions of doctrine; they were jealous of their rights and privileges; they would have naught from Rome. Yet, they have always guarded, and they guard to-day, the position of Confirmation in the sacramental system of the Church; and they have consistently refused to be amalgamated with various Protestant bodies which reject the sacramental character of Confirmation, because they regard such a position as heretical.

So, the consent of the Christian world goes back to the ninth century. And the consensus does not stop even there. For, the Eastern heretics (like the Monophysites, the Nestorians and the rest), who away back in the fifth century were cut off from the Church, hold with her in this doctrine about Confirmation. And therefore, from the consent of the Catholic Church from the beginning, of the schismatical and

heretical Orientals (Greeks, Russians, and all the Slav nations), of Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian and Egyptian Christian bodies, it is clear that the doctrine of the sacramental nature of Confirmation has been admitted in all the churches. No innovation, this; but Apostolic tradition, going back to the chosen ones of the Master and from them to the Redeemer Himself.

The early Christian writers speak of the sacred anointing and of the imposition of hands for calling down the Spirit of God. Thus Theophilus,[1] Irenaeus,[2] Cyprian,[3] Innocent,[4] Ambrose,[5] Augustine,[6] Origen,[7] Firmilian,[8] Basil,[9] Chrysostom,[10] Cyril of Jerusalem.[11] Tertullian speaks in the clearest terms of the ritual anointing which comes after Baptism, to complete the in-

[1] In lib. ad Autol., c. 1, n. 12.
[2] L. I, c. 21, nn. 3, 4.
[3] Ep. 70, n. 2.
[4] Ep. 25 ad Eugubin., c. 3.
[5] De Sacram. l. 3, c. 2.
[6] Contra litt. Petil. l. 2, c. 104.
[7] In ep. ad Rom. 6, 3.
[8] Inter ep. Cypriani 75, n. 7.
[9] De Spir. S. c. 27.
[10] In Act. Apost. hom. 18, n. 3.
[11] Catech. 3 mystag.

duction into Christianity by the special effusion of the Holy Ghost through the imposing of hands. It will be interesting and instructive to quote some of the sayings of this ancient Christian controversialist. Thus in his book against Marcion he says: "Indeed, up to the present time, he (Christ) has not disdained the water which the Creator made wherewith he washes his people; nor the oil with which he anoints them." [1] In his book, "De Resurrectione Carnis," he writes: "The flesh, indeed, is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed (with the cross), that the soul too may be fortified; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands, that the soul may also be illuminated by the Spirit; the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may fatten on (its) God." [2] And particularly, in his treatise on Baptism, after remarking that in this sacrament sins are remitted, although the Holy Spirit is not yet given in

[1] L. 1, c. 14.
[2] C. 8.

a special manner, he continues: "After this, when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction—(a practice derived) from the old discipline, wherein, on entering the priesthood, (men) were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses. . . . Thus too, in our case, the unction runs (down our flesh) carnally, but profits spiritually, in the same way as the act of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are plunged in water; the effect spiritual, in that we are freed from sins."[1] "In the next place the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through (the words of) benediction. . . . Then over our cleansed and blessed bodies willingly descends from the Father that Holiest Spirit: over the waters of baptism, recognizing as it were His primeval seat, He reposes."[2]

And so, from those early days we look back to Apostolic times and to the sojourning of the Master with His own.

[1] C. 7.
[2] C. 8.

The preceding considerations will be of use to us, especially when the wise (?) ones of the world prate knowingly about the findings of what they call history. True and reliable history not only has nothing to say against Christ's institution of the sacrament which we are considering, but gives powerful support to the truth established by the argument of prescriptive possession.

But the Master, our Blessed Lord and Redeemer Himself, what of Him? As we turn to the gospel record, we do not, it is true, find it expressly stated that Jesus Christ instituted Confirmation—nor is such a statement at all necessary; but there is enough there to afford solid foundation to the truth for which we are contending. For, He promises that He will give to *all* the faithful the Holy Spirit to remain with them forever:[1] He spoke of the "Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him,"[2] and of the special coming of that Spirit; "for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."[3] Therefore,

[1] Cf. John xiv, 16.
[2] John vii, 39.
[3] Id. ib.

with His eyes fixed upon the consummation of love which would lead Him to Calvary and through the gates of failure to the glory of triumph, He promised to give the Holy Spirit in *a special way,* not identified with the ordinary presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul because of sanctifying grace. In this ordinary fashion that Spirit had most surely been already given to Christ's loved ones, whilst He was still with them; but, beyond this, somehow and somewhere and sometime He would send the Spirit to the Apostles and would give to His Church a means by which this special indwelling of the Holy Ghost might come to *all* of His dear ones who would long for the Gift of God. That was His promise.

And for the fulfillment we turn to the pages of the Acts of the Apostles.[1] On the day of Pentecost, in the midst of a sound as of a mighty wind, the Spirit of God came down in the form of fiery tongues and sat upon each of those who were gathered in the Upper Room. But, not even here was the

[1] Cf. Acts ii, 1–4.

fulfillment of the promise with regard to *all* who should believe. These special manifestations of wonders, which accompanied this outpouring from on high, were not to be continued in like manner and in like measure unto the end of time. Yet, the Spirit *was* to come forevermore. And how? In Confirmation.

Look at St. Paul, as he treats with the new converts of Ephesus. Thinking that they have been baptized and that, therefore, they are in possession of the Holy Ghost whose indwelling accompanies the grace of Baptism, he asks them about the imposition of hands. "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In whom then were you baptized?" [1] Isn't his meaning patent? He had spoken to them of a special receiving of the Holy Ghost, other than that which comes from Baptism. When, then, the disciples said that they had been baptized only "in John's

[1] Acts xix, 2, 3.

baptism," Paul saw to it that "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;" [1] and then he gave them the sacrament of Confirmation. "And when Paul had imposed hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." [2]

Again, when Samaria had received the faith and Baptism from the deacon Philip, who was preaching the gospel among them, Peter and John came to them from Jerusalem: "Who when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for he had not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." [3]

This, then, is the fulfillment of the promise of the Master—the sacrament of Confirmation. It is different from Baptism; for the rite is different; the minister, different; the effect, different. The imposition of hands, spoken of in the Acts, is ac-

[1] Acts xix, 3, 5.
[2] Acts xix, 6.
[3] Acts viii, 15-17.

complished in the anointing with the sacred chrism by the imposed hand of the bishop. "In the place of this imposition of the hand there is in the Church confirmation," says Eugene IV.[1]

Therefore, this sacred rite, vouched for by the earliest of Christian historical writings (the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles,) confirmed by the testimony of the Fathers of the Church, established by the firm support of prescriptive possession, and guaranteed by the infallible living voice of Christ's Church—this is the holy sacrament of Confirmation, instituted by the dear Christ to work out the stupendous effects intended by Him.

And what are these effects? Before detailing other effects of Confirmation, it will be well to mention one effect similar to the effect of Baptism and Holy Orders. This is especially brought before us by some of the names by which this sacrament is called—such as the sealing and signing of the Holy Spirit. This effect is the sacramental character indelibly impressed upon

[1] *Decret. pro Armen.*—Denz. n. 697.

the soul, the sealing of the Holy Ghost, the sign marking us off for special functions.

Without going into the subtleties of theological discussion, it may be said that this sacramental character is a supernatural quality, by which we are in a particular manner conformed unto Christ, especially consecrated to the worship of God, and destined for unique outpourings of grace. We are conformed to Christ, not in the likeness of nature (that is the work of sanctifying grace), but in the likeness of His priesthood. For, as the great St. Thomas Aquinas says, "as Christ has the full power of spiritual priesthood, so His faithful are likened unto Him in this that they have some participation in spiritual power with regard to the sacraments and those things which pertain to the divine worship." [1] By Baptism the faithful are consecrated in the priesthood of Christ to the extent of being capable of receiving the other sacraments, which are the fruits of His priesthood. But Baptism's complement is Confirmation. On earth the service and worship of God are

[1] 3, q. 63, a. 5 in corp.

a fierce warfare against foes; and so, the members of the household of God participate further in the priesthood of the Christ, in so far as they are marked off for the spiritual combat. They are signed with the seal of the *soldiers* of the Savior, to fight against the spirit of wickedness in high places and against the visible enemies of earth who range themselves against God and against His Christ. Besides this more general participation in the priesthood of our Lord, there is the most special and particular participation in His priesthood, given by the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which the ministers of the Master are given part with the great High Priest in the very mysteries of God.

By the sign or seal of Confirmation, then, those, who are marked, are separated in the sight of God from the weaklings; they are known to the angels of heaven as the soldiers of Christ the Captain; they are shielded in a special manner by these ministers of grace from the raging foes of earth and hell.

And this seal will last unto the endless

ages of eternity. It will endure as an added glory to the faithful warriors of God and as a burning shame for the traitors who have turned away from the bleeding Leader who conquered from the cross.

We should reverence this consecration of our souls; we should respect this sealing of our spirits, whereby we who in Baptism were made the servants, aye, the brothers and sisters of Christ the King, are in Confirmation made the soldiers who are to fight for the true and living faith of Christ the Prophet—just as those who have part in the special priesthood of the Savior, have a portion in the ministry of Christ the High Priest. Reverence, then, deep and glowing for this!

Besides imparting this sacramental character, Confirmation has its effect in terms of grace, which is the life of the soul. "By Baptism we are spiritually reborn," says Mother Church; "by Confirmation we are increased in grace and strengthened in the faith."[1] As was said before, "Baptism saves in peace; Confirmation arms for

[1] Eugenius IV, *Decret. pro Armen.*—Denz. n. 695.

war."[1] The doctrines of faith and the precepts based thereon cannot be held and observed save in the face of hidden snares or open attacks. Therefore, to the life into which we entered through Baptism, the soldierly strength to fight with loyal spirit for the defence and practice of the faith is added through the sealing of the soldier. As to our growth in sanctifying grace, we need only to remind ourselves that the slightest augmentation of this heavenly gift is worth more than all that this world holds—and would to God that we but realized this to the full! Into the particular helps to which this sacrament of Confirmation gives us the title, we may well try to gather deeper insight.

Within due limits it is true to say that our Confirmation is our Pentecost. Subject to the restrictions of His all-wise Providence, God wills to pour out His Spirit upon us through this sacrament, even as on the birthday of the Church He baptized His chosen ones with fire. Of course, there are differences. The Apostles and first dis-

[1] Pesch. l. c.

ciples of the Lord had a very special mission, which we humble followers of the Christ have not—and to them the gift of God was miraculous in its advent and in its wonderful manifestations, Yet, *all,* if they would be, were to be strengthened for the struggle which all must face; and that strengthening is to be found in the sacrament of Confirmation.

Therefore, if we wish to see what God wills that Confirmation should effect in the souls of His soldiers, we may look to these champions of the cross. In our case, no marvels, no wondrous gifts of prophecy and of tongues and of miracles, which were more needed in the infancy of the Church than now in the days of her glorious strength: but, for all that, within limits what Pentecost did for them Confirmation does for us unto the strengthening of our souls for the battle ahead.

What, then, is the effect of the sealing and signing of the Spirit of God? Through the dimness of the night, lighted by the springtime moon, look at the figures of frightened men scurrying away from the garden on the

mount of Olives, whilst in the midst of a ruffian crew, with His hands bound and His pain-drawn face lighted by the flaring torches, a majestic figure is moving onward to Jerusalem to the consummation of sorrow and of love—the Master alone in the midst of His foes and His chosen ones fleeing away. See two of the fugitives turn and follow from afar off, even unto and into the palace of the High Priest. See him who was foremost amongst the Master's followers seat himself in the midst of the servants, the object of suspicious glances and searching words and, perhaps, of scarce concealed threats. See him, at the questioning of menials and of maids, raise to the unfriendly throng a face, first timid, then defiant; and hear him curse and swear that he knows not the man: then see him go forth into the night and weep bitterly, thanks to the mercy of the reproachful glance of the condemned Christ, who was passing to His doom.

And after the day of dread which snatched away from the disciples the Master whom, for all their weakness, they did love,

see them stunned and crushed by a calamity so great, that they forgot the words of prophecy and leaned upon a reed of broken faith. See them crouching behind doors, closed and barred for fear of the Jews. Oh, forsooth, the strong, brave soldiers of the conquering Leader Christ! Look upon them, even after they had regained the firmness of faith and had gathered some of the valor of the cross, after the forty days of intimate communion with their risen Lord, after the glorious ascension of their dear Master into the joys of the Father's glory—look at them, still waiting by order of that Lord (who knew them, oh! so well), waiting within the Cenacle for the coming of the strength of the Promise of the Father. And then there came "a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon everyone of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." [1]

And now! Now look upon those who

[1] Acts ii, 2–4.

had cowered in abject fear before foes, who, in the mingled exultation of triumph and dread of the portents which swept the earth, may perhaps have given no thought to the despised disciples of the hated Nazarene. When the city's crowded throng had rushed together, marveling at the wonders which had stirred men's souls, Peter in the midst of the other Apostles stood forth before them.

But a few weeks before, their voices had swelled the shout of angry rejection of the Christ, as they shrieked, "Away with him; away with him! Crucify him."[1] They had hurled blasphemous revilings upon Him as He toiled out to Calvary and was there nailed to the cross, which was the gibbet of His death. And now with courage, newborn from heaven, Peter, who had feared the words of servants—aye, of a girl, faced these men and told them the message of God. The Christ, he told them, whom they by the hands of wicked men had crucified and slain, God had raised up, as had been prophesied by David: of this resurrection he, Peter,

[1] John xix, 15.

and the other Apostles were witnesses: God had made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom they had crucified.[1] And he concluded his ringing proclamation of the truth by saying: "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."[2] There, truly, was the brave soldier of Christ, facing any and all dangers for his Captain.

We see the Apostles haled before the hating Sanhedrists and commanded to speak no more the name of the crucified malefactor—and we hear their proud defiance, warrior bold, that they must obey God rather than men.[3] We see their shoulders cut by the stinging lash—and behold them glorifying that they are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus.[4] Later on we see all of them (even as Paul) in a very whirlwind of Apostolic ardor carry the standard of the cross throughout

[1] Cf. Acts ii, 14–40.
[2] Acts ii, 38.
[3] Cf. Acts iv. 5–21.
[4] Cf. Acts v, 40, 41.

the world, though that cross was "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."[1] As the Apostles stood on the confines of a new land to which they were bearing the glad tidings of salvation and the grace of the Savior Christ, they must have realized the weakness which was theirs, as sons of Adam; but they gloried that they could do all things in the strength which was theirs, as the soldiers of God.

Such was the effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost; such was the result of the signing of the soldier in the case of the Apostles. And for us, Confirmation is to be our Pentecost, not, I repeat, with the marvels of the first-fruits of the Spirit, but with the abiding courage of soldiers, marked and sealed unto a holy cause.

Unlike Baptism, Confirmation is not necessary as a means for the attainment of salvation: it would even be hard to establish its unconditional necessity as the result of a gravely binding command of God or of His Church. Without it one might escape the

[1] I Cor. i, 23.

unspeakable shame of a traitor or a renegade; or, if he fell, he might be lifted up by other means which the dear Christ has left to His own. Still, if we but faintly realize what is ahead of us in life, we shall not need the lash and spur of necessity to urge us to avail ourselves of the strength within its sacred anointing. And what is ahead? Fighting and battle.

Over the skies of our life the war clouds are massed thick and threatening, and hosts of foes are drawn up against us in battle array. After the days of prattling childhood have passed, no age is privileged; neither sex is exempt from the toil of service and the fury of attack; no condition of life is so shielded, that the fierceness of struggle leaves it in peace and quiet. In serried ranks beneath the black banner of evil, the world, the flesh, and the devil are leagued against us: the Prince of darkness is the hostile chieftain.

We sometimes hear it said that the days of persecution for the faith are passed—those days, when the champions of Christ had to face the wild beasts of the arena and

the tiger-hearted judges and executioners in the halls of tyrants; when to be a Christian meant to be called to the almost certain glory of martyrdom. And, of a truth, they have passed in most places, if we look only to the persecution unto the shedding of blood. Yet all persecution has not disappeared. We still have to face a tyrant world and a tyrant public opinon and a tyrant fashion and a tyrant sensual civilization, which are lapsing back into paganism. Times are changing, it is true, and with the times the attitude of men's minds is changing too; but much of the old opposition to God's rights remains, and, doubtless, will remain until long after you and I have been called to our last rest. We are not called upon to-day to make a brave defense of Christian verity in the same way as a Justin the Martyr or a Catherine of Alexandria; but we should be able to defend our faith against the aspersions of ignorance or bigotry, whether conscious or unconscious. We are not haled before the judge's tribunal and made to feel the biting sting of the swinging, cutting scourge; but we do have to stand before the

supercilious smile of the senseless and the raised brow of the scorn of fools—and we must be loyal enough not to flinch.

Is this reference to persecution the wild vagary of an excited imagination? Far from it. How often, in many quarters, are we made to feel that to be a Catholic is to be "out of form," "second rate" and the rest! How often are we told that someone is "surprised" that we are Catholics, not because we have fallen down from high ideals of principle or conduct, but because we have shown some small degree of intelligence or some response to what is noble! Such things as these are not, of course, to be looked for in those (oh, the irony of it all!) whose minds are held in bondage and whose spirits are dwarfed by the oppression of an intruding Church! Has it, perhaps, been your experience that persons whom you have met for the first time have found it needful in their condescending patronage to inform you, on learning that you are a Catholic, that "really they have the highest esteem for a Catholic" and that "some of those whom they have known well and deeply

revered have belonged to that faith"? I have had it said to me and I candidly confess that it aroused the fighting spirit within me and made me desire to forget for the time the conventional amenities of politeness.

Even the fact that we are Catholics is not an insuperable obstacle to some nobility of human nature! Marvelous, is it not? As if it were at all remarkable that one should belong to Christ's only true Church, and yet retain some semblance of uprightness. As if to be a Catholic, and at the same time a lady or a gentleman—a Catholic, and yet to have an intelligence which can see the obvious when forced upon one, were a wonder. As if (what is far worse) to be a priest of that Church and yet a man; a priest, and yet a loyal citizen; a priest, and yet one not absolutely to be shunned, were another marvel of the world.

Yes, it takes the bravery of a strong and loyal soldier to face these things, and still to glory in our noble heritage as we should. Glory? Why should we not glory in our heritage? Where can there be found a line

of ancestors like unto the Saints, our brothers and sisters who have gone before us, and who stretch in unbroken succession up to the Saint of Saints, Christ Jesus our Blessed Lord? Members of the mystic body of Christ, soldiers of the sacred army of which He is the Captain and Leader, and whose march down the ages shows, not ruined homes and broken hearts, but peace and strength and joy and heroism! Children of that grand old Church which has stood for truth against falsehood, for enlightenment against ignorance, for liberty against slavery and licence, for good against evil! Thank God for it! No, not shame, but glory—and thank God for it!

That glorious faith, or heritage, we must guard loyally against schism and heresy, against the tainting influence (so widespread to-day) of liberalizing and modernizing tendencies, against the lifeless listlessness or the rabid onslaught of indifferentism. God's faith and God's Church, the guardian of that faith—loyalty to these two till the call goes forth that shall close for us the day of fighting! And all

the while, the strife, on our part, must be bitter only in the intensity of effort, never in the sentiments of our heart, with love for all—except for evil.

Not only the doctrines of God's faith, but the commands of God's law must be the object of our loyal fealty. We must stand for these laws and fight for these precepts first of all in our own lives, and then in the lives of others. In business and financial relations, we are to stand like adamant for fair-dealing and honest justice against injustice and extortion. We must not fall in with the methods of those who wring unworthy fortunes from the bleeding hearts of wretched ones who are too weak to resist them. We must oppose a brave front of uncompromising antagonism to those who are satisfied with the most outrageous chicanery, provided they can escape prison bars and prison stripes, and who are quite content to throw righteousness to the winds, if only they "play the game according to the rules." Yet, on the other hand, Christ's soldier should be as unwilling to defraud an employer of the rightful and

faithfully discharged amount of labor due him, as to rifle his safe; as unwilling to have recourse to unjust coercion, as to "hold him up" with thug methods. We must fight the *good* fight!

In social life and in social relaxations, the warlike spirit of heroes—or shall I say, especially heroines?—will make the soldiers of Christ stronger than a pagan and debased public opinion. They will have the courage to do, as some valiant ones across the seas and some high-minded women in our own land have done, when they absented themselves from certain "fashionable functions," because they could not effectually exclude the unbecoming and would not, even indirectly, be parties to it. And if the body of Catholic women is to act with the spirit of heroines against the depravity and looseness of present-day indiscretions, it will be because within the heart of each one of them there has been aroused the spirit of a Joan of Arc.

In our individual lives the bravery and loyalty of true soldiers will make us fly all sin; for it is vile with the hateful vileness

of treason against the Captain. Through all our days let us be true to our Leader to whom we have sworn allegiance!

Let us, then, one and all, be true to the standard of Christ in faith, and in works without which faith is dead! If only we are earnest in our efforts to be loyal to ourselves and to our God, the strength of the Holy Ghost, which is pledged to us in Confirmation and which will undoubtedly be given to us, will make us equal to everything.

But, you may say, it is *so* hard! Hard? What of it? It is right; it is noble; it is part of our calling. Hard? It may be hard, nay, it is hard to the frailty of corrupt nature. But, we are blessed with a high destiny; and our fidelity to duty will, even here below, bring a compensation which is worth more than the wild dissipation of frenzied enjoyment. We have the source of strength in Confirmation. And after all, we are not—or should not be—pampered pets of luxurious softness, but soldiers of Christ, signed with the seal of the Holy Spirit of God, ready to fight for our Captain through the dread horrors of war even unto the end.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND HOPE FOR SALVATION

Another means against evil. Wreck wrought by sin. Is there forgiveness for sin, and how?—Virtue of Penance: sorrow for past; purpose for future. Acceptable to God: testimony of Old Dispensation; revelation of New Testament.—Sacrament of Penance. Institution by Christ: His power to forgive sin; He gave power to Apostles and to those who continue their ministry. Real power of forgiveness; not mere declaration of pardon. Judicial power: hence, confession. Necessity of Sacrament.—Effects: forgiveness; sense of sin; strength; good to individual and society. Is not easy path to sin, but strongest urging to virtue.

Our previous reflections have been concerned with the truths touching the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. By the first of these sacraments we are born again to the life of God by our incorporation with Christ, "the first-born of many brethren;"[1] the misfortune whereby our heritage was lost through the perfidy of rebel first-parents is undone; nay, if Bap-

[1] Rom. viii, 29.

tism comes to us only in our adult years, the crimes of personal revolt are condoned; heaven is waiting for us as our home, when the pilgrimage of life shall be past. That pilgrimage, however, is not a peaceful journey to another land. It is a march through the territories of relentless foes, with battles to be fought and attacks to be met and victories to be won. And to give us the strength worthy of the warriors of God and the soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are signed with the seal of the Spirit of God in the sacred anointing of Confirmation.

All would be well, if we were to be true to the engagements of our Baptism, wherein we were pledged to renounce the world of evil and the devil with all his works and pomps. All would be safe, if, faithful to our soldierly allegiance, we would loyally stand by our consecration to the standard of Christ the Captain. But, alas for the fury of the fierce onset! Alas for the weakness of poor human nature and the faltering cowardice of inconstant wills!

Because of these, the unending charity of the Savior must search the depths of the love

of His Sacred Heart for another way to undo the work of sin and to win back for Himself the recreant souls of men. This other invention of His limitless longing for man's nearness and man's love is the Sacrament of Penance—the Second Hope for Salvation. The consideration of this sacrament in its larger outlines and in its results will make for our deeper appreciation and holier love for this gift of God, and will tend to our spiritual betterment.

Oh, the glad, bright day when we started upon life's way with the robe of baptismal innocence upon our souls, joyous in the smile of love of our Father in heaven! That sacred, blessed robe of innocence! Did we keep it white? How long did we carry it unsullied?

Do we remember the day or the night, when, after many smaller failings and much neglect of prayer and of the other means of grace, we stood weakened and faltering, looking in the face of spiritual death, which was disguised under the smiling and alluring figure of sin, the enchantress? Can we recall how we dallied with the temptation?

how we half yielded and drew back hesitant and frightened? and then, perhaps, with the recklessness of supreme folly clasped the captivating lure to our souls—and turned our backs upon our God? It was our first mortal sin, our first crime, of thought or deed. And lo! the sun was blotted out of our heavens; the light fled away from our world; the life went out of our soul. Boys and girls, men and women passed us by and glanced at us, and saw no change in us. Yet, they could not look down into the heart. God could; and He saw a desolation greater than that which sweeps along in the wake of a tornado or crawls after the gruesome spectre of war. Where glory had gleamed, there was defilement; where light had shone, there was the blackness of night; where life had throbbed, there were the starkness and corruption of death.

And then the other sins—and the others—and the others of yours and mine and of so many of the faithless children of faithless forebears! Was the bulk of mankind, which Saint Augustine called the "massa

damnata," the mass damned and doomed, to be doubly damned, not only through the perfidy of the head of the race, but by the crimes of the individual members of that race? The saving of Baptism was brought to naught—and Baptism's sacred birth could not be had again. Was there any other hope for salvation?

Yes, was there any other hope for salvation? Well, indeed, might the spirit of man ask the awful question, after the delirium of transgression had passed away. The answer to the question meant everything to the recreant soul. Would God forgive? Perhaps the rebel soul had had its one chance, and could look for nothing but the shadow of crime, which is punishment. Would God forgive? And if He would forgive, under what conditions would the pardon be granted? To fix these conditions rested solely with God; for He was God, and He was the one offended by sin. If He demanded satisfaction, as He had an undoubted right to do, what satisfaction would He demand? If, in His infinite justice, He demanded complete and condign satisfac-

tion, how in heaven's name could it ever be given, since a creature could never adequately atone to an offended Creator?

Who would or could give an answer to these torturing questions? Mere nature, mere unaided reason could give no decisive response; for all depended upon the free choice of God Himself. Some self-constituted prophets, wise in their own conceit, yet flouting a revelation from God, might declare that it was enough to retract the evil will of transgression, and that all would then be well. But, how did they know? In spite of their rejection of God's revelation, did they have a revelation, which alone could make known the ways of God? What was their guarantee for the possession of such a revelation? And if God had revealed that He would forgive, did not that revelation lay down the conditions on which alone forgiveness would be granted? Was there—oh! was there a second hope for salvation, and if so, what was it?

Now, where unaided reason was baffled and helpless, God's revelation, given from the depths of fatherly love, brought the

light; and with the light, comfort; and with comfort, peace and another and a new beginning in the service of God. For, there was to be forgiveness for such sins as were committed after the reception of Baptism; the first offence was not to be the sealing of an endless doom; there was to be a way to undo the work of evil. That way was the way of penance, with the conditions marked out by God.

In the first place, we may consider penance as a virtue most pleasing to the all-merciful God. Moved by God's grace, which elevates man's natural and fruitless efforts to the plane of the supernatural, the sinner looks at his act of sin. As he gazes upon its evil malice, he hates and detests it as an offense against God; he resolves never again to rise in rebellion; he determines to make such satisfaction for his transgression as lies in his power. With sad realization of the evil of his ways and with bitter regret, he says from the earnest longing of an afflicted spirit and from the deep yearning of a contrite (or broken) and humbled heart: "Would to God that I had not

sinned! Would that I could undo the past!"

This is the efficacious will which hates what it loved before, when it chose sin in preference to God; and this, aided by God's grace, offers to the Lord what compensation it can for the injury against Him. And as the future looms big before him, the repentant sinner will not (so may God help him!) make that future what the past has been, and he will offer such atonement as may be possible. This is the sacrifice which the Lord God will not refuse: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."[1] This is the compensation which, because of Christ, the divine mercy accepts unto the wiping away of transgression.

For, accept it God will. No longer need soul-killing dread make us hesitate as to whether God will forgive, or as to the conditions under which He will grant pardon. Both in the Old and the New Testament He has revealed His loving will; and the way is clear—the way of penance.

[1] Ps. l, 19.

Joel says in the name of God: "Now therefore saith the Lord: Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil."[1] And Jeremias proclaims in the name of the Most High: "If that nation against which I have spoken, shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I have thought to do to them."[2] And in the name of the Lord Ezechiel declares: "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed . . . living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done. . . . Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities: and iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourself a new heart, and a new spirit: and why will you die, O house of Israel? For I desire

[1] Joel ii, 12, 13.
[2] Jer. xviii, 8.

not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, return ye and live."[1]

Repent the sinner must, if he would have forgiveness. For, God's wisdom will not let Him be reconciled to one who holds to his foul heart a mad aversion from his Lord and a proud clinging to evil: His justice demands at least this reparation for the arrogance of insulting transgression: His sanctity will not allow Him to unite to His fatherly love the sin-besmirched vileness of revolt. Yes, repent the sinner must; but when he does repent, then God will take him back into his heritage, as He clasps the prodigal to His great Heart.

And so, in the Christian economy when our dear Lord brought to earth the sweet dispensation of the Testament of love, this condition for the sinner's return to God was not and could not be revoked. Penance was the burden of the Precursor's preaching. Penance was the urging of the Master Himself: "No, I say to you; but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish."[2]

[1] Ezech. xviii, 21, 22, 30–32.
[2] Luke xiii, 5.

Penance was the message of Peter in the name of the Apostles: "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." [1]

During the days that were longing for the Just One, penance was not a sacrament. But, the blessed Savior raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, in order that the faithful, who are incorporated into Christ's mystic body by the waters of Baptism, might more securely undo the folly of transgressions committed after their regeneration in the laver of salvation. He placed in the hands of His Church the ministerial power of the remission of sins, and He determined the acts by which sinners must obtain forgiveness. This Sacrament of Penance is the sacrament of the New Law instituted by Christ, by which through priestly absolution the sins committed after Baptism are remitted unto the contrite sinner who confesses his transgressions and promises satisfaction.

No one who lays claim to the dignity of a Christian will be prepared to deny or doubt

[1] Acts iii, 19.

the fact that our blessed Lord Himself had the power to remit sins. He claimed the power and He exercised it.

When He stood over the woman taken in adultery, as she crouched at His feet after the departure of the pride-hardened Pharisees who had accursed her, He looked down into her breaking heart, in which sorrow and hope were pulsing the tears from her eyes, and He said: "Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."[1] And He cleansed her from her sin.

As He was at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, there came into the banquet hall the sinner of Magdala, who had cast away her woman's sweetest glory and fallen into the depths of shame. Tears were burning down her cheeks and her eyes could scarcely discern the form of the Master, who had won her sorrow-stricken heart from evil and unto Himself. At last she found Him, and standing behind at His feet

[1] John viii, 10, 11.

she began to wash His feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and she kissed His feet and anointed them with precious ointment. What though the hyprocritical Pharisees despised her and drew the hem of their garments closer to avoid the defilement of her touch, as they called her sinner and unclean? She cared not. She was turning to the service of broken-hearted love all the charms which she had used to her own and others' undoing—her eyes, her lips, her tresses, her fragrant ointments: and she deserved to hear from Christ's dear lips the words of loving forgiveness, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."[1]

Yes, Christ claimed the power to forgive sins, and He proved His right to it by miracle. "And behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."[2] And there were some of the scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts: Why doth this man

[1] Luke vii, 48.
[2] Matt. ix, 2.

speak thus? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?[1] Aye, truly, who can forgive sins but God only—and he to whom God has given a share in His power? And that power Christ had, as the Son of God; that power He had, as the Son of man, because the Father had given it to Him. For, He said: "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son. . . . And he hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man."[2] And as with divine insight the Redeemer read the secret thoughts of His accusers, He said to them: "Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether it is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, Arise, and walk?"[3] Truly, neither the one nor the other was easier, since both bespoke the infinite might of God. "But," continued the dear Lord, "that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the man sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose,

[1] Cf. Mark ii, 6, 7.
[2] John v, 22, 27.
[3] Matt. ix, 4, 5.

and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men."[1] Yes, Christ had the power of forgiving sin.

That power, with other powers, He promised to His Apostles and to those who would continue their work for the Kingdom. The Master said to Peter: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."[2] And that same Master said also to the other Apostles: "Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."[3]

The days of sorrow came and the great battle of the Captain Christ. He died in the defeat of Calvary, and was laid away

[1] Matt. ix, 6–8.
[2] Matt. xvi, 18, 19.
[3] Matt. xviii, 18.

from the eyes of men. Yet He conquered in that defeat and won an everlasting victory. He rose again; and on the evening of the first glorious Easter day He stood in the midst of His Apostles and saluted them with His holy greeting of "Peace be to you."[1] "He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[2] Thus did He give to them and to their successors in the ministry the power of really and truly forgiving all sins submitted to the judicial power of the keys—a power to which all sins had to be submitted.

Christ Himself did not merely declare the forgiveness of sins already wiped away by the mercy of God; but He truly forgave them, and He had come into the world to destroy the reign of sin: in fact, all judg-

[1] John xx, 19.
[2] John xx, 21-23.

ment had been given to Him by His Father. And so too He commissioned His Apostles and their successors in the ministry to destroy the empire of Satan in the hearts of the truly penitent, and to do it by really forgiving sin. For this very function He gave them the Holy Ghost in a special manner: and they needed this special outpouring, which neither they nor any one of the faithful would have needed for the mere preaching of the word. If, indeed, their forgiveness, instead of being a real remission, was to be only a declaration of a pardon previously accomplished independently of them, they could not even have declared such a remission apart from a special revelation from God in the case of everyone to whom they applied that declaration—nor was such a revelation ever promised. No, the power given to them was the power of real remission: they were truly to pardon with the power of the Redeemer of the world.

The most important consideration in this connection is that this power, conferred upon His ministers by the Victor Christ,

is a *judicial* power—one to be exercised after the manner of a trial, in a judicial process of examination and passing sentence. For, as the Council of Trent [1] so well calls to the attention of the thoughtful mind, the power conferred by Christ is a *two-fold* power: it is not only the power of remission, but is as well a power of retaining. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." [2] It is not a power to be exercised as a merely gratuitous gift, nor as a benefit pure and simple, towards those who profit by it. It is not to be exercised according to the whim of the possessor of the power. But, it must be used by Christ's ministers according to the laws of the Kingdom of Christ and according to the merits and dispositions of the sinner who stands at the bar of merciful justice.

There must be an investigation into the case. And for this investigation of the case, necessary as a consequence of the nature of the power itself, the ministers of the

[1] Sess. XIV, c. 5, can. 9.—Denz. nn. 899, 919.
[2] John xx, 23.

sacrament must needs have cognizance of the fault or crime. Therefore, there must be *confession,* in order that they, the judges, may know the sins committed and also the disposition of the penitent, who is to be forgiven, if he is worthy, and to be bound, if he is indisposed. Then by the sentence they loose from sin those who are rightly disposed, and they bind the others. Of course, this binding does not constitute the guilt of the criminal; for a judge in any cause, and especially a judge acting in the name and in the person of Christ, does not make or effect the guilt of the one who stands for judgment, but acts on guilt already proved. Again, the power of binding is not only negative, in so far as forgiveness is not granted: it is positive as well, in as much as (in the case of forgiveness) it prescribes the punishment to be undergone and the satisfaction to be made, if the culprit would profit by the power of absolution.

Quite different, then, is this power from the power of Baptism, which is not the power of binding *and* loosing, but the simple ministry of reconciliation.

So, in this sacrament, the sinner, according to the sweet providence of the merciful Christ, places himself before this tribunal of mercy with a contrite and humble heart. He himself is the sorrowing witness; for no one but himself knows even secret sins and the depths of his own soul with regard to open transgressions. In the contrite confession of his wrong-doings he tells the story of his sins to Christ's minister, who exercises power in the name and in the person of the Savior. With the power of that Son of man, to whom was given the power on earth to forgive sins and who made His ministers partakers of that power, the priest absolves the penitent from his sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (unless—which heaven forbid!—he be obliged to bind instead of loosing), and the penitent rises up a child of God once more and an heir of heaven, even as the sinner of old stood up before the face of the Master, as He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." [1]

As is quite clear from the judicial charac-

[1] Luke vii, 48.

ter of the power of binding and loosing, the necessity of confession is manifest. Yet, right here is the great difficulty in the case of so many. To some of the Church's faltering ones it is a matter of at least unspoken complaint, and to those who are without the fold it is truly a stumbling-block. They say: "We will not confess to a man, though he be the minister of Christ. We will go straight to God." To such as these I would say: Will you also forgive yourselves and grant yourselves pardon for your offences against God? Who is the one offended by sin? God. Who is to fix the conditions under which sin will be forgiven? God. And He has done just this: He has fixed the conditions under which sin will be forgiven. For, the dear Christ, to whom the Father has given all judgment because He is the Son of man, with the authority of the Godhead has fixed precisely this means for the pardon of mortal sins committed after Baptism, namely, the sorrowing confession of sins together with the priestly absolution. If anyone wishes for forgiveness of sins, he must have recourse

to the means prescribed by God, and put aside any suggestion that comes from personal indolence or individual pride.

The Sacrament of Penance is as necessary for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, as is Baptism itself for the wiping away of original sin and of the actual sins which an adult may have committed before the waters of regeneration cleansed him from defilement.

And if it be asked: Under the Christian dispensation, is forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, impossible without the reception of the Sacrament of Penance? the answer, sure and certain, is the same as the reply to the other question: Can the grace of God come to one who has not been cleansed by the waters of Baptism? And that answer is: In God's ordinary Providence, No. Through the provisions of God's special Providence, a soul which has elicited an act of perfect love of God or an act of perfect contrition (which carries with it this perfect love of God) is blessed with sanctifying grace and the forgiveness of the sins committed before or after Baptism.

Yet this grace is not given without regard for the sacrament of Baptism, in the one case, and of Penance, in the other; and the recipient of God's grace lies under the obligation of having recourse to the sacrament itself.

From this obligation only he is exempt who cannot have actual recourse to the sacrament, through physical or moral impossibility of so doing, or through an inculpable ignorance which is itself an insuperable barrier to compliance with the obligation. In this regard Baptism and Penance are identical: Baptism saves from the all-destroying deluge; Penance is the plank for safety after shipwreck—the Second Hope for Salvation.

Having considered the institution of this Sacrament of Penance and its necessity, it will be useful to reflect upon its effects. The first and most important effect of the sacrament is the forgiveness of sin, by the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul. It was for this that it was instituted; this is its purpose to the end of time. An awe-inspiring and overwhelming effect! but

one which by many is slightingly ignored or looked upon as unworthy of consideration. The reason of this lack of appreciation for the stupendous efficiency of this sacrament is the dwarfed and stunted idea, which many have, of the monstrous malice of the sin which is wiped away.

If such sinners were in the place of the wretched leper who knelt at the feet of the Master and cried out from the depths of a heart where hope had been born of faith, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," and after the Master's merciful reply, "I will. Be thou made clean,"[1] had risen up from before Him, sound in body and with his blood bearing life, instead of death, through his members—they too, perhaps, would have followed the Master in the way with their hearts singing a song of gratitude and love within their breasts. Yet, there is a greater mercy here; for here the foulness of a soul-destroying plague is purged away, not once, not seven times, but till seventy times seven[2]—and beyond. If,

[1] Matt. viii, 2, 3.
[2] Cf. Matt. xviii, 22.

in their own case, had been exercised the sweet omnipotence which gave back to his mother's arms the son of the widow of Naim, or to the love of dear ones the grave-corrupted Lazarus, they would never cease to extol the goodness of the all-merciful One. But, greater love is here.

Alas! the lack of appreciation for the gift of this sacred sacrament of merciful love can be explained only by the fact that men do not even begin to realize what God is, whom sin offends, and what sin is, that offends Him.

That God is our Lord and Master, our Creator and Benefactor, our Father and Lover. Infinite are His power and majesty and truth and goodness and beauty and love. He is the source of the unbounded joy of eternity, which is Himself. He is the object of never-ending bliss for all His intelligent creatures.

And sin? Disobedience, rebellion, scorning of a Father's love, rejection of the Savior's tenderness; lying, deceiving, degrading, foul, vile. From the sight of the horror of this evil offspring of evil let us

mount to the heights of heaven's glory and see the joys of which it robs us. Let us descend into the burning depths of the despairing realms of eternal doom and touch the tormenting chains which it would snatch from the devil and his angels and rivet upon itself forever and forever. Through the dimness of the darkened sun let us creep up the hill of Calvary, groping through the dun clouds of terror, until we stumble against the blood-stained cross. Let us look up at that thorn-crowned head, those blood-bedimmed eyes, those haggard and swollen and bruised cheeks, those pain-distorted lips, those hands and feet dug with the nails and oozing forth the blood that drips blackened on the dusty rock, that whole body torn and cut by the scourge's lash. Let us see the broken-hearted Mother standing beneath the awful rood—let us see all this—and realize the all but infinite evil of the monster, sin. And it is from this monster that the Sacrament of Penance frees the sinner, as it washes his soul white again in the blood of the Victim Christ.

Besides, the Sacrament keeps alive the

sense of sin, which is so wanting in the world to-day, as that world goes on in its blind, mad rush for riches and pleasure and place.

These mighty boons were worth purchasing at the price of life itself; for their value far outweighs the value of life. They should make it easy for us to bear the hard things of this holy sacrament. And, of course, there are hard things in the sacrament. Confession of our sins is not easy to the pride of human nature; nor is it comforting to the self-sufficiency of egotism. But, it is not a question of what is easy: what God requires is the point, and God requires the confession of our wrong-doings.

Still, the difficulty is often exaggerated. That difficulty is almost nothing by the side of the consoling peace and holy security which come from the seat of mercy's justice. In the tumult of passion or in the deadly stillness of a conscience which has been drugged and, perhaps, killed, the small voice of remorse cannot be heard. If the soul awake not, this silence is as terrible as

the crash of the thunder of judgment, which it forestalls. Yet, if the soul comes out of the rush of dissipation or out of the self-created stillness of apathy, then the heart which has known the love of God and which realizes the truth of its rebellious revolt with a distinctness which might almost lead to the abyss of despair, eats upon itself in the bitterness of remorse. It may cry to God for forgiveness; it may bewail the evil day which saw its departure from the ways of innocence: but what would it not give for the authoritative assurance of pardon! Oh, for the words, spoken in the person and with the authority of the Savior, "Go in peace; your sins are forgiven you"! Oh, for the sentence of one who stands for Christ, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost"!

Blessed, though maligned, Sacrament of Penance! Sacred, though calumniated, tribunal of merciful justice! From this tribunal go forth souls cleansed from guilt. There go forth souls strengthened with counsel for the avoidance of the pitfalls of

evil. There goes forth the wealthy capitalist, resolved to do justice to his workmen, to whom he must give a living wage, instead of wringing foul dollars from broken manhood. There goes forth the workingman, determined to give to employers the just equivalent of wage or salary, and not to make the tyranny of labor as immoral as the worst tyranny of capital. (And if the one and the other do not go forth with these salutary resolutions, it is because, with a blindness that has not seen the wrong, they have not unfolded the depths of their deluded souls.) There go forth parents, prepared to carry the burden of their honor and dignity with regard to children, born and unborn. There go forth, too, weaklings, who are not yet heroes of God, but who are determined to strive with awakened earnestness for the nobility of true manhood and unsullied womanhood. There go forth the Father's children, who entered the sin-stained prodigals of wasted substance. And in the case of those who have been true to God (and, God bless them! their number is legion), there go forth men and women

and children with an added glory of the grace of God enriching their souls with beauty supernal, with hearts raised still higher to the face of God, with strength for the hard things of life, with the guardianship of innocence against adversaries, devilish and human.

This sacrament gives back to God the reparation of obedience and lowliness against the pride and rebellion of transgression. To the individual soul it brings forgiveness of sins, and, through the examination of conscience together with the sorrow for sin and the purpose of amendment, it warns away from the occasions of future falls, and is itself a powerful support against the weakness of the will. It makes for the betterment of society by guarding the laws and by upholding the holiness and sacredness of domestic life. It undoes wrongs inflicted upon others, and demands the restitution of ill-gotten goods and the indemnification for unjust loss inflicted upon the neighbor. It brings into the common level of a weak and erring humanity, which intends with God's help

to strive for the higher and the better things, all men of all conditions of life—kings and rulers as well as subjects, rich as well as poor, priest and bishop and Pope as well as the humblest of the faithful of Christ's fold.

It is far from being what some misguided critics of God's dispensations would make it out to be, an easy path to sin. On the contrary, it is the strongest urging to virtue. It is far from being the soul-destroying palliative for an evil conscience which its enemies call it. Quite the opposite; for it calls to conversion of heart with the terrible voice of God's justice, mingled with the alluring invitation of His mercy. There is no question of saying, in act if not in word, "I'll only have to confess it," with the implied inference, "and I'll sin again." In that disposition of soul, devoid of true sorrow, there would be no forgiveness of sin. But, it means that instead of flattering oneself with a specious and, perhaps, sentimental regret for past transgressions, the sincerity of those dispositions must be submitted to the judgement of Christ's ap-

pointed minister, who, in the person of the Savior, decides upon the reality of sorrow and upon the sincerity of the determination to adopt such means against future failure, as may give some promise of honest endeavor in the sight of God.

For him, then, who with heroic fidelity to God has never turned away from his Father's love; for Christ the Leader's true soldier, who has never yielded in the face of the foe—there is no personal need of gratitude for the institution of this sacrament, which is the Second Hope for Salvation, except, indeed, in so far as this sacrament is responsible for his fidelity. For those favored, noble, blessed souls, who, receiving in Baptism the bright robe of innocence, have "kept it white," there is no stern necessity of grasping at this plank after shipwreck. But, for those of us who have soiled that robe, who have lost the wedding garment for the banquet feast of the King, who have scorned our Father's love and betrayed our Captain Christ, eternity itself will not be long enough for the paeans of our whole-souled gratitude for this sacrament,

and a single needless hour in our sin is too long to delay in our recourse to this gift of God's loving mercy—the sacred, blessed, powerful, merciful, sweet Sacrament of Penance.

As for those who in the pride of their heart will not admit this economy of God's justice and mercy, may God help them! As for those who know it not because of blameless ignorance, we leave them to the ways of mercy of God's special Providence. But, as for ourselves, we not only adore the Christ and bless Him, because by His holy cross He has redeemed the world, but because He has placed the streams of His saving blood within His Church's keeping, to flow upon our sinful souls through the channels of this sacrament, wherein the contrite (broken) heart is healed and the humbled heart is not despised of God; wherein the work of Satan's malice and of man's weakness is undone; wherein we are led back from the paths of perdition to the ways of godliness and of peace from which we had wandered.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOOD OF STRENGTH

Holy Eucharist noblest of sacraments. Its place in Church's life. Incarnation continued. Eucharist a Sacred Mystery of faith and love. Christ's preparation for promise; promise itself; to be taken in literal sense.—Eucharist a Sacrament. Denial of "Liberals." Institution at Last Supper. Real Presence in obvious and only meaning of Christ's words. Babel of tongues in contrary interpretation. Apostles' teaching; St. Paul's doctrine; Fathers of Church; ancient liturgies; Church's faith, Transubstantiation.—Eucharist a Sacrifice. Memorial of Christ's death: real sacrifice, continuation and renewal of Calvary. Fruits of Sacrifice.—Applications: love for mystery; hunger for sacrament; participation in sacrifice.

From the thoughts which have occupied our attention in the preceding chapters we must have realized somewhat better than before the wonderful and all-embracing love of our blessed Savior in our regard; for we have seen how He thought of all our needs and provided for all our necessities. The sacraments which we have already con-

sidered show this to evidence. We have seen how in Baptism we are born again in spirit unto the life of God; how in Confirmation we have been strengthened with the valor of the soldier to fight bravely against the assaults of earth and hell; how in the Sacrament of Penance a second hope for salvation has been provided for those who have failed and fallen.

Now we come to the most wonderful, the sweetest, the holiest and most touching manifestation of our Lord's loving care for us. We are to be spiritually nourished, so that our soul's life may be sustained and may grow into the fulness of healthy vigor. It was for this that our dear Lord gave us the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is the noblest of all the sacraments and possesses a glorious splendor all its own. The others contain grace, to be poured forth into the souls of men; this Blessed Sacrament holds the Author of all grace, even the loved Christ Himself. It is the center of the whole sacramental system; and on it all the other sacraments have a relation of greater or less

dependence. Nay, it is the very center of our holy religion and of the life of the Church of God. Like the heart which throbs in our breast and sends the blood coursing through our veins with life-giving energy—such is this sacrament to Mother Church. From it she derives her undying strength for the defeat of evil and the triumph of good; round it her worship moves in ceremonial liturgy. As she went down through the ages in conflict, in passing defeat, in enduring triumph, she gave the best of all that earth held to the glory of her Eucharistic God, for whom her glorious basilicas and cathedrals rose in mighty grandeur. And in those cathedrals, the spot towards which all else converged was the altar with the tabernacle, where the Lord was offered in sacrifice and abode in love to cheer and bless His dear ones.

No wonder that the Saints, aye, and the Church herself, even in the bursts of poetic eloquence which mount higher than earth, should feel the futility of human endeavor when it comes to the telling of the sweetness and the glory of this gift of God, and should

urgè us to give free rein to the effort of fancy to tell its praises, with certainty as to the inadequacy of the result. "Quantum potes, tantum aude, quia major omni laude, nec laudare sufficis"; "Boldly dare to the utmost of your powers; for He is greater than all praise, nor can you sufficiently laud Him."

The wondrous mystery of the Incarnation brought the Son of God from heaven to earth to lead our life and to save us and to make of us who were sinners, the brothers and sisters of His love. And this sacred mystery is not only recalled; it is actually continued here. He had said: "I will not leave you orphans":[1] and truly He would not; for He would be "Emmanuel, God-with-us."[2] As, in the Incarnation, the Word of God hid the glory of His Godhead under the lowliness of human nature and became truly a hidden God, though the Savior;[3] so in this sacrament the Christ hides the majesty and sweetness of His lovable humanity beneath the sacramental species

[1] John xiv, 18.
[2] Matt. i, 23; cf. Isa. vii, 14.
[3] Cf. Isa. xlv, 15.

in an obscurity, impenetrable save by faith. As He went through the land of Galilee and Judea doing good to all, comforting, encouraging, healing the sons of men; so here He pours forth the riches of His grace and love into the souls of those into whom He comes in Holy Communion. As He offered Himself in bloody sacrifice upon the awful gibbet of shame; so here He offers Himself on the altar a clean oblation to the Lord to magnify His name.

Towards the Holy Eucharist the ages that went before looked forward, as they typified in weak figures the glory that was to be. Around it are grouped the centuries since gone by and the years that are still to come ere this old world of ours shall shake before the blast of doom. This Holy Eucharist is the subject of our present consideration. And may the love of God inspire our minds and hearts with grace from above, so that we may appreciate in some small, though added, measure the Holy Eucharist, which is the Sacred Mystery, the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Sacrifice of our faith.

It is truly a mystery, put before us by

God Himself and held by Mother Church, who in the sacred Council of Trent professes that "in the sacred sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is contained truly, really, and substantially under the appearances of sensible things."[1] Yes, a great mystery—a mystery of faith and love. And marvelously would the dear Master prepare even for His promise of this wondrous gift.

Stand in spirit present at the scene which the Beloved Disciple, St. John, puts before us in the sixth chapter of his gospel story. Forgetful of the wants of nature, the throng followed the Master in the way and hung upon His lips, as He preached the word of salvation: they kept close to Him because of the magnetic charm of His presence and because of the miracles which He wrought. It was near the time of the Paschal feast, only a year before the Savior's mortal career would close. Up the hillside He went, and after Him came the crowd of eager listeners.

[1] Sess. xiii, c. 1.—Denz. n. 874.

It was a vast gathering of about fifteen thousand people; for the men alone, says St. John, numbered five thousand. The Christ made them sit down upon the grass, which covered the hillside; for He was going to provide for their bodily wants. He asked for what food there was. Now, in all that crowd the only food to be found consisted of five loaves and two fishes, which a boy had with him. These the Master took, and, giving thanks, distributed to the people by the hands of the Apostles. And—wonder of wonders!—there was no end to the supply: the bread and fish were multiplied, a superabundance flowing forth as if from the fountain of creative omnipotence. And when all had had their fill, the Apostles gathered up the fragments and filled twelve baskets. Well might the astonished people cry out: "This is the prophet indeed, that is to come into the world." [1]

"Jesus therefore, when he knew that they would come to take him by force, and make him king, fled again into the mountain himself alone." [2] He wished for no king-

[1] John vi, 14.
[2] John vi, 15.

ship but the kingship of the heart through love, based upon the faith which would make men free. So, He would flee away, and His disciples would go down to the sea and pass over to Capharnaum.

As the night came down, the Apostles put out into the deep; and Jesus was not with them. Then from out of the West the wind rushed down from the Galilean hills and struck the sea with fury. It lashed the waters into a seething cauldron of angry billows, riotous in their strength. The Apostles were in the teeth of a storm, where all their knowledge of the sea and all the strength of their sinewy arms and all the quickness of alert minds were needed, to ward off the cold death that leered at them from behind the black waters. On through the night they toiled, laboring at the oars, with no land yet in sight. Then out upon the heaving waters they saw the majestic figure of the Master, quiet and calm amid the riot of disturbed nature. He was walking toward them upon the surging waves through the wildness of the storm. "And they were afraid. But he saith to them:

It is I; be not afraid."[1] And He entered into the ship; "and presently the ship was at the land to which they were going."[2]

What does it all mean? It means that Jesus Christ is Lord and Master of nature. At His word of power, absolute and creative, food is multiplied. He walks upon the waters like a disembodied spirit. He shows that for Him, even in His sacred manhood, the laws of nature are as though they did not exist.

These marvels were His preparation for the promise which He was about to give. Let us note and remember this preparation well. It will serve us to good purpose in what is to follow.

On Friday the people who had been fed by His bounty, hearing that He was at Capharnaum, followed Him across the sea (or around the head of the lake); and on the Sabbath they were about Him in the synagogue. Then He spoke to them the words which pledged His love one day to give to the world His gift of gifts. Rising from the

[1] John vi, 19, 20.
[2] John vi, 21.

consideration of the miracles which He had wrought, in such a way as to show quite evidently that He had performed these prodigies as a preparation for the words which He was going to utter, He spoke to them of faith—whether of faith in Himself as Messiah or of faith in Himself as the bread of life, matters little. He spoke of the food which He would give, more filled with heavenly virtue than the manna from on high. "And," He said, "the bread which I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world." [1] There, in plain words, is His promise.

But did He mean it? Of course He meant it; for He said it. But, from the sad day of the breaking away of the sixteenth century until now, many have decided that He did not mean it, and that He spoke only of a figurative or symbolic giving of His body and blood, in as much as He used words in a metaphorical sense. Yet—and let us mark this distinctly—metaphors are not manufactured at will: they have a fixed and definite meaning which is determined by

[1] John vi, 52.

usage. Among the people whom Christ was addressing, the expressions,' "to eat one's flesh and drink one's blood" could, indeed, have a metaphorical sense; but if they were to bear a figurative meaning, they must bear the one, fixed meaning which the words could have with these hearers—or they must be forever unintelligible. If, then, in the present circumstances this one metaphorical meaning is inadmissible, one must return to the literal meaning which the words bear upon their face. Now, the only figurative meaning of "eating one's flesh and drinking one's blood" was this: to hate one with the deepest hatred and to inflict some great and dreadful pain upon one. Therefore, if Christ had used the words in a figurative meaning, He would have been telling His hearers that, unless they hated Him with the extremity of hatred and struck Him with punishment most dire, there was to be no chance for them to live with life eternal. Now, to stand for such a meaning in Christ's regard would be blasphemous.

No; it took the desire of getting away from the sweetest promise ever given by God

to men, to invent a symbolic meaning for the words of Christ. He meant just what His words declared in their literal sense—and those to whom He spoke understood Him. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" [1] Do you see now the reason of Christ's preparation for His promise? "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" How! How could He multiply the five loaves and two fishes so as to feed the thousands? How could He walk upon the waters of the stormy sea? By the omnipotent power that is His who is Lord and Master of creation and Sovereign over the laws of the material universe. How! There is no room for the proud or doubting "how" when God has spoken. And spoken He has.

Without a doubt, Christ's hearers understood Him. And, far from retracting what He had said, He repeated it over and over again. "Amen, Amen I say to you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in

[1] John vi, 53.

you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever."[1]

Yes, He meant it. And as for the difficulty aroused by His words, He said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life."[2] His sacred body was to be the food of the soul, not by the grossness of a bloody eating of dead flesh, but by the sacramental partaking of His body, vivified by the spirit, the sole principle of life. The spiritual mind, aided by faith, could grasp the meaning of His

[1] John vi, 64.
[2] John vi, 54-59.

words: the carnal mind, left to the gross corruption of fleshly standards, was of no avail. Faith He demanded—else all were profitless for us. But, faith does not *make* the reality which it believes. As in the Incarnation, whether we believe it or not, Jesus Christ took human flesh unto Himself; so in the Eucharist, whether we believe it or not, He will give that flesh to the world for the food of the soul. Yet, without faith it will profit us nothing.

Now, many of the Jews—aye, many of Christ's disciples would not rise to the height of the faith demanded of them; and they said: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it? . . . After this many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him."[1] They walked no more with Him! It may have been the beginning of an eternal separation from Him. He had come to save them at the price of the cruel death upon the cross; He loved them even unto that consummation which in a year's short space would be accomplished in Jerusalem: but He *must* have

[1] John vi, 61, 67.

faith in His sacred promise of the gift of love—and He let them go!

And turning to the Apostles, those chosen ones who had experienced His dearer care and love, who were to be the pillars of His Church that was to be, He said: "Will you also go away?" [1] He would have let *them* go, if they had not been ready to bow down in the humility of faith before the wondrous mystery of His promised gift. "And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." [2] Of a truth, to whom would they go? Only to the Christ. Somewhere and somehow the Christ, the Son of God, would make good His promise of love.

A mystery indeed—the mystery of faith and love. Yet the Apostles believed the promise, as the souls of the faithful have believed ever since: and the mystery calls for faith, founded on the word of God, faithful in His omnipotence.

[1] John vi, 68.
[2] John vi, 69, 70.

That promise was fulfilled in the institution of the sacrament which in loving reverence we call the Blessed Sacrament. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ under the species (or appearances) of bread and wine, instituted by Christ for the spiritual refection of our souls.

It was only in the nineteenth century that there came the first denial of our Lord's institution at the Last Supper of *some* sacramental rite. The so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century did not deny that the Eucharist was a sacrament, though they made its real meaning void. But, since the last quarter of the past century the critics who glory in the style of "liberals" have come to deny that Christ wished to institute any sacred rite at all.

However, their position is not based upon any ground, whether historical or critical, which is peculiar to the question of the Eucharist: it depends solely upon their false notions of Christ Himself and of His work. They deny that our dear Lord was the Founder of a Church or of any sacra-

mental system for the sanctification of men; and their attack upon the august sacrament of the Eucharist is of a piece with their rejection of the true mission of the Savior. Hence, this is not the place to show the shallowness, the arbitrariness, the contradiction of their position. With pity for their blindness, which will not see the light of the sun of God's love in the world, and with a prayer for their enlightenment unto the ways of salvation we pass them by.

For the true understanding of what our Savior really instituted we go back to Him and to the scene in the Cenacle on the night before He suffered. From the day when at Capharnaum He had promised His flesh as food for the life of the world a year had passed by, filled with the ministry of mercy and the preaching of the Kingdom. And now, up from the horizon were rolling the thick clouds of hatred and malice, which were to gather and to burst in the storm that would overwhelm the Master. It was the night before His sacred Passion; and with His dear ones He was seated at table, eating the Paschal supper.

He had desired to eat this Pasch with them before He suffered;[1] He had longed to have this last peaceful communing with them ere He began to tread the sorrowful way at the end of which loomed the cross. Only a few short hours with His own before the breaking of the storm! But His love would make these moments more precious than years of other times. He had eaten the Paschal lamb according to the prescriptions of the law—who shall say with what emotions? as He realized that, before another sun had set, He, the true Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,[2] would have been offered in bloody sacrifice on the altar of the cross. Now He would leave His testament of love to His "little children,"[3] as He tenderly called them: now He would fulfill the promise made a year ago at Capharnaum.

"And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. And taking the

[1] Cf. Luke xxii, 15.
[2] Cf. John i, 29.
[3] John xiii, 33.

chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." [1] "Do this for a commemoration of me." [2] And there and then in the brightness of love divine, whilst all about was dark with the blackness of malice and hatred anl perjured loyalty, the Blessed Sacrament was instituted, the first Holy Communion was given to the world, as the first Holy Mass was said; and close to the heart of each Apostle beat the great Sacred Heart of Jesus, throbbing with the immeasurable love that would redeem the world.

The body and blood of Jesus Christ were really and truly present under the appearances of bread and wine; and this sacred presence was to be effected again and again by His Apostles and by their successors, who were commissioned to do in commemoration of Christ what He Himself had just done.

With Mother Church we take Christ's

[1] Matt. xxvi, 26–28.
[2] Luke xxii, 19.

words according to the letter, and hold to their natural and obvious sense. In so doing we are wise. As Bossuet said, "there is no more reason for asking us why we take the proper and literal meaning (of Christ's words) than for asking a traveler why he follows the broad highway." [1] We take them in this sense because they can have no other.

A figurative or symbolic meaning the words of institution cannot have. For, bread and wine are not in the nature of things the symbols of flesh and blood: neither were they previously declared by our Lord to have been given this representative character. The wildness and arbitrariness of the symbolic or metaphorical interpretation can be seen from the fact that, before the end of the sixteenth century, Bellarmine [2] could state that those who held to the figurative meaning had already given two-hundred different explanations to four of the simplest words ever put together and uttered in human speech. And

[1] *Exposition de la Doctrine de l'Eglise Catholique,* ix.
[2] *De Euch,* l. 1, c. 8.

in our own time the efforts have been multiplied still more, of course without result, except to make confusion worse confounded. According to Juelicher, Christ symbolized His death: Spitta refers the words of institution to Christ's Messianic reign: Pfleiderer, to His coming victory: Reville, to His union with His disciples: Goguel, to His gift of Himself: Weizsaecker sees in the words only a parable, which Jesus left without any explanation. Alas for the pride and weakness of human waywardness! Whosoever, without preconceived notions and with unprejudiced mind, will read the story of the Last Supper and the simplest of simple words, "This is my body," "This is my blood," should not find it hard to decide whether our dear Lord wished to propose to the theologians and critics of the future an insoluble enigma or really and truly to give Himself to His disciples and to His Church.

The Apostles were the ones to whom the Redeemer spoke the words of institution; and they understood Him according to the letter of His words. These Apostles were

not like the modern rationalists, who in the puny power of their little intellects laugh to scorn the possibility of the supernatural and jeer at the fact of miracles. They had followed their Master through the three years of the public ministry, where miracles accompanied His passing as the flowers bud forth at the coming of spring. They had breathed and lived in the very atmosphere of the supernatural. Only a short year before, they had professed their belief in the promise, whereby He had pledged Himself to give them His body to eat and His blood to drink. And here at the Supper was the fulfillment. So they believed: so they handed on the tradition to the ages that were to come.

St. Paul's teaching about the Eucharist is luminously clear.[1] The practice of the early Church is shown forth in the accounts of the Acts of the Apostles.[2] To refer to the unmistakable testimonies of the Fathers of the Church and of ancient ecclesiastical writers would be like rehearsing a catalogue

[1] Cf. I Cor. xi, 23–29.
[2] Cf. Acts ii, 42; cf. I Cor. x, 16.

of names and works. St. Justin Martyr, St. Ignatius, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. John Chrysostom and so on—are all outspoken in their expression of belief that the Eucharist is verily the body and blood of Christ. The liturgies of the ancient Church, the formal instruction of catechumens—all these unite in a grand, soulful pæan of praise and adoration towards the God of the Eucharist. Nay more, for upwards of a thousand years no whisper of doubt or denial was heard, and up to the sixteenth century but a few passing clouds obscured the glorious light of faith. If, then, the Church was wrong, so was Jesus Christ: if she erred, He led her into error. And one who from his heart can utter such a blasphemy, must turn his back on the Church and on Jesus Christ, and put his face towards a hopeless life here and towards despair hereafter.

But, the Church is not wrong. Thanks to the ever-present guidance of the Spirit of God, her faith fails not. That faith is clearly set forth by the Council of Trent in

these terms: "Since Christ our Redeemer said that what He offered under the appearance of bread was His body, hence it has always been held by the Church of God, and this sacred synod again declares it, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there is effected the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. And this change is suitably and properly called by the Catholic Church transubstantiation."[1] The body and blood are, indeed, the body and blood of the *living* Christ; and, therefore, the whole Christ, body and blood and soul and divinity, is present under both species by virtue of natural connection and concomitance. But, His body is under the species of bread and His blood is under the appearance of wine, by virtue of the words of consecration—by transubstantiation.

This transubstantiation is the conclusion which must be drawn from Christ's clear words, understood according to the letter, as

[1] Sess. xiii, c. 4.—Denz. n. 877.

they must be understood. In fact, the doctrines of the real presence and of transubstantiation are so closely bound together, that to deny the latter is to refuse belief to the former.

All this is a mystery? Most assuredly it is. And our stand is not taken on what falls under the senses, but on the word of God, which sounds in the ear of faith and is answered by the cry, "I believe, O Lord Christ. Thou hast the words of eternal life." As we bow down before this august sacrament of love, we may well exclaim with Mother Church in the words of the Tantum Ergo:

"Therefore we before it bending,
This great Sacrament adore;
Types and shadows have their ending
In the new rite evermore:
Faith, our outward sense amending,
Maketh good defects before."

Mystery and Sacrament, the Holy Eucharist, the sum of the wonders of love, is also a Sacrifice. It is the memorial of the death of Christ; it is the Sacrifice of the New Testament, which is followed by the communion of the victim. "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chal-

ice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come,"[1] says St. Paul. "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me:"[2] "This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins":[3] these are the words of the Master, as He stands on the threshold of His awful Passion and within the very shadow of Calvary. The body, soon to be given on the cross for mankind, and the blood, to be poured forth in atonement to seal the new alliance, are given to the Apostles—and it is thus they will henceforth be given to His disciples to the end of time, the body and blood of the Victim of the world. As in the old alliance, sealed with the blood of animals, the victim was partaken of by the chosen people; so too in the new testament, sealed with the blood of the God-Man, the faithful partake of the flesh and blood of the holy Victim, immolated for them, and in this reception they have part in the sacrifice.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is a commemor-

[1] I Cor. xi, 26.
[2] Luke xxii, 19.
[3] Matt. xxvi, 28.

ative sacrifice. But, it is a *real* sacrifice, for all that. It is Calvary commemorated, continued, and renewed. "In this divine sacrifice," says the Council of Trent, "that same Christ is contained and is immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in bloody sacrifice on the altar of the cross." [1] On Calvary and at the altar the Victim is the same—Christ: on Calvary and at the altar the Priest is the same—Christ, who on the cross offered Himself by Himself, and now offers Himself at the altar by the ministry of His priests. Only the manner of oblation is different. Then it was amid the horrors of disturbed nature and the wild hatred of gibing, blaspheming foes: now it is in the sanctity of the clean oblation foretold by the prophet, amid the silence of adoring throngs and the loving welcome of ransomed souls.

When we come to realize that this sacrifice of the altar, by the power of Christ, merges into the eternally redeeming sacrifice of the cross of Calvary, we can understand better why it is and has ever been the

[1] Sess. xiii, c. 2.—Denz. n. 940.

center of our God-given religion—our oblation to the Father, in attestation of our subjection to His unbounded dominion; our voice of thanks; our plea for pardon; our cry for the blessings of which we stand in need. Since it is the sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, we grasp, even though feebly, how it is, that, as the Council of Trent says, it is truly propitiatory, and how through it comes to pass, that, if with a sincere heart and a right faith, with fear and reverence, with a contrite and humbled spirit we draw nigh to God, we shall obtain mercy and shall find grace in timely aid. For, the Lord appeased by this oblation, grants grace and the gift of penance, and wipes out even enormous sins and crimes.[1] Nay more, beyond the portals of this life the tide of blessings flows, until it laves the sorrow-locked shores of the "Prisoners of the King" and brings comfort to our dear departed, who have passed away in the peace and love of God and await the glad day of their admission to their Father's home.

[1] Ibid.

All this, because the Mass is Christ's sacrifice. Look at a magnificent basilica, like St. Peter's, on some greater solemnity when, perhaps, the white-robed shepherd of Christ's flock offers up this sacrifice in the midst of thousands and tens of thousands of faithful hearts, with the gorgeous ceremonial befitting the majesty of the Victim. Look at some dilapidated forest chapel, or at an altar whose canopy is the vault of heaven and whose temple is the wild woodland, where some toil-worn missionary sacrifices in the midst of simple neophytes of barbarous and savage life. Look at the thousands of churches throughout the world, where Mass is offered up. Always and everywhere, it is the selfsame propitiatory Sacrifice of the New Testament, the sacrifice of redeeming love.

As the sacred moment of consecration is at hand, the ringing gong or the tinkling bell sends forth its notes over the kneeling throng, announcing that the great moment is near. The silence of worshiping love grows more intense. As the words of consecration are spoken, the body and blood of

the Victim of the world are on the altar in mystic sacrifice, and are offered up to the Father in propitiation for the sins of mankind. And to the eye of faith, back of the altar rises a cross, bearing the mangled Victim of sin. To the ear of faith, there rings forth the cry of the centurion, "Indeed this man was the Son of God."[1] To the heart of faith, the world-redeeming oblation is renewed in its commemoration.

No wonder that Mother Church makes this sacrifice the very center of her life. It is her act of worship through all the days till the Lord shall come again in majesty to judge the living and the dead. Around the Calvary of the altar she gathers her little ones, with Mary and John and the faithful women, and she looks up at Him. She looks up with her heart cut to the depths at thought of what sin brought to the Lamb of God: she looks with confidence to the Father, to whose outraged majesty condign satisfaction has been given: she looks up with love to the Priest and Victim Christ, who has washed away the sins of the world,

[1] Matt. xxvii, 54.

in order that He might present to Himself as His Spouse a Church without spot or stain, but adorned with the jewels of grace and virtue, purchased at the price of His sorrow-drenched oblation.

In the face of the stupendous sublimity of this sacred mystery of our holy faith, we may well bow down in humble reverence. We may well thrill with love before the transcendent effects of the Blessed Sacrament, which increases the sanctifying grace of God within us; which unites our souls with Christ by the ever-strengthened bond of charity, to be perfected in the beatific vision of God; which does for our souls what corporal food does for our bodies, sustaining, strengthening, repairing and delighting; which in its heavenly effects flows over upon our very bodies and, whilst restraining the fires of concupiscence, sanctifies us by contact with the virgin body of the Virgin Christ and fits our very flesh for the immortality which shall be ours, when corruption shall have put on incorruption.[1] With glad hearts we may well take part in the

[1] Cf. I Cor. xv, 53.

offering of the sacrifice of clean oblation, which from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same is offered to the Lord of Hosts, that His name may be magnified among the Gentiles. [1]

Let us turn to the tabernacle, where the Prisoner of love is keeping watchful ward over His "little children." Let us not leave Him there alone day and night, with only the gleam of the sanctuary-lamp to keep Him company. Let us go to Him in our sorrows and our weakness and our trials and our temptations; and as we kneel before Him, we shall find comfort and strength and consolation and victory. Let us offer Him the homage of hearts which would atone to Him for the evil of personal transgressions and for the coldness of those who have not known the sweetness of His gift of love, or, having known it, have fallen into the disdain of indifference or the bitterness of open hostility.

Let us go to the banquet-table where He is waiting to pour into our souls the abundance of divine love, as He feeds us with His

[1] Cf. Mal. i, 11.

sacred body and blood; and let us go, not as if it were a favor to Him, but as if it were for us, as it is in very truth, the highest privilege and an honor of which the angels of God might well envy us the happiness. Let us go to Him, not grudgingly, not seldom, not fearfully, but with hearts expanded to meet the greatness of His condescension, frequently, and with the confidence of those who rush to a dearly loved one. Thus let us partake of the Victim of the altar and of the cross.

And let us go to church for Holy Mass, not as unwilling courtiers, forced by command to attend in the presence of the King; but as ardent adorers in spirit and in truth, glad to bow down before the unbloody Calvary of our sacrifice. With faith and love and longing and sorrow let us hasten to get close to Him, just as we should (please God!) have left all to follow His bleeding footsteps out along the way to Calvary on that first Good Friday, to take our place beneath the world's redeeming rood and to tell Him that for us He would not die in vain.

Mystery—Sacrament—Sacrifice! Let us adore forevermore the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, the summary of God's wonders of love in our regard, the Holy Eucharist.

CHAPTER V

HEALTH OR HELP

Church's response to every yearning of soul; beauty; stability; respectability; health.—Definition. Complement of Penance. Position of Reformers; of rationalists.—Institution: foreshadowing; declaration of St. James; consideration of text, James V, 14, 15. Tradition. Prescription.—Effects: defense in face of death; strength against "relics" of sin; grace of God unto destruction of sin. Secondary effect, subject to God's good pleasure, is health. Delusion of postponing sacrament.—Lessons: resistance to sin; prompt return to God; loving recourse to sacrament, if possible.

The study of those of Mother Church's sacraments which have already occupied our attention, must have given us a deeper appreciation not only of our Savior's love for us, but also of the grandeur and beauty of the Church herself. Christ has left her with the charge to lead men to holiness and through this nearness to God to bring them to their heavenly home; and the sacramental system forms a large and important part of the means of fulfilling, according to the be-

hest of the Master, this mission of hers to sanctify mankind.

Holding as she does the key to the treasure-house of Christ's mercy, she has within herself the most complete satisfaction for the noblest yearnings of the human soul. As a matter of fact, her enemies of a liberalizing and modernistic cast of thought try to turn against her this very power of corresponding to every human need. They confidently declare that her response to every claim of man's heart is explained by the fact, as they call it, that all she has is only the outcome of an inward longing, which creates for itself through the process of evolutionistic development the very means of satisfaction. Poor, hapless wanderers from truth! "Which of you", says our blessed Lord, "by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?"[1] No one, truly. Yet, the blinded ones, who will receive neither the light of God nor the eyes to see that light, have done quite the opposite. By their foolish thought they have taken away from the noble stature

[1] Matt. vi, 27.

which would have been theirs, if they were the humble hearers of God's word, and they have belittled themselves unto the puny meanness of darkened stumblers in the gloom.

In very truth, the dear old Church has helps for every need; but she has them from Christ. She has solace for every sorrow; but she has it from the Master. She has response for every noble yearning; but she holds it from the bounty of the Lord. And she does not, as some others do, make the religion of the Master synonymous with what is but a phase or an effect or a manifestation of that true religion.

We yearn for beauty; and she gives it to us in the charm of Christ's sweet morality, which, through the call of the Crucified Lover of men, allures by its uncompromising sternness; in the ideal of God our Father who is in heaven; in the attractiveness of material things, which she turns to the service of God, as she calls forth the highest efforts of music and poetry and painting and architecture, to praise the beauty of God Himself. But, she does not,

as the Greeks did, make a religion of beauty-worship: instead, she leads the soul to the foot of the cross of Christ.

In our life as social beings we want and we must have stability of social institutions and of government, or else the way lies open to the chaos of anarchy. And the Church gives it to us by safeguarding the laws of justice on which political firmness is built; by upholding social, domestic, and individual virtue, without which the grandest nation enters upon the path to inevitable dissolution and decay. But, she does not, as the Romans did, look upon religion as a mere adjunct of the civil power: she looks beyond the bourne where nations cease to count.

Respectability, too, is a something worth cherishing—a culture which is real and deep, an appreciation for the better things of life and for the amenities of social intercourse. And the Church gives us the true valuation of the dignity of our fellowmen as brothers and sisters of Christ; she urges the consideration which is due to others as to the children of God, at least by

destiny. But, she does not, as so many of the modern pagans do, make exterior respectability the acme of existence; she is not satisfied with making clean the outside of the cup, leaving the inside full of defilement; she is not content with building and adorning whitened sepulchres, which outwardly are fair to the sight, but within are filled with dead men's bones.

And so too, to close this enumeration of illustrations, in many or most instances, health is a very desirable thing. And the Church does very much even for this natural good by her lessons of sobriety and moderation and self-restraint, nay, by the very obligation of penitential abstaining. She has, too, a sacred sacrament, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, which, within the limits of God's holy will, makes for the restoration of bodily health. But, she does not, as so many do to-day, make of health and of the search for it the very essence of religion itself. She does not look upon the good of the body as paramount, whereas it was the interests of the soul that wooed and won the heart of the Christ. She regards

pain, not as a something to be scorned with stoical indifference or to be denied through an outrageous perversion of reason, but as something to be borne with Christian patience, to be sanctified by union with the suffering Christ, to be assuaged, if God so will, by aid from on high.

The sacrament of Extreme Unction brings home to us again the unending care of our blessed Lord for the children of His love. He has provided for all our wants in the life of the spirit; He meets us on every side with new instances of His thoughtful loving-kindness. Baptism He gave for the grace of regeneration into the life of God; Confirmation, for the grace of perfection and of strengthening in face of the fight ahead; Penance, for the grace of judicial absolution and the forgiveness of the sins by which after Baptism we have forfeited our supernal rights; the Holy Eucharist, for the spiritual nourishment of our souls and for the oblation unto the end of time of our sacrifice of dependence upon God. And so, too, He gave Extreme Unction for the grace of spiritual medicine unto the spiritual, and

sometimes corporal, strengthening and healing which we need in the time of dangerous sickness. Thus, in health and in strength we have Him by our side; in the weakness and pains of sickness we are not deserted.

Extreme Unction is the sacrament of the New Law, instituted by Christ (as all the sacraments are and must be), in which by the unction of the blessed oil and the prayer of the priest there is conferred upon the Christian, who is dangerously ill, health of soul and, if it be expedient for the welfare of the soul, health of body as well. It is the sacrament of health or help—health and help of the soul always; health of body, if it pleases the Lord.

Just as Confirmation is, as it were, the perfecting and completing of Baptism, so Extreme Unction is the perfecting and completing of Penance. Nay, as the Council of Trent says, this sacrament has been considered by the Fathers of the Church as the consummation not only of the Sacrament of Penance, but of the whole Christian life, which should be a continual penance. [1]

[1] Cf. Sess. xiv.—Denz. n. 907.

The so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century rejected this sacrament with more or less injurious expressions of contempt. Luther, for instance, speaks of it as a wild delirium,[1] and Calvin calls it theatrical hypocrisy.[2] The critics of the liberal and modernistic school of thought refuse to see in the rite, referred to in the fifth chapter of St. James' epistle, anything more than a recourse to ordinary prayer and a natural remedy; or at most, according to them, it is the charismatic gift of healing, possessed by some in the early Church and referred to by Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians when he says: "And God indeed hath set some in the church; first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly doctors; after that miracles; then *the graces of healings,* helps, governments, kinds of tongues, interpretations of speeches."[3] As for the remission of sins, spoken of by St. James, they see in it only a reflection of the Jewish notion that sickness is a consequence of sin and that pardon and cure go hand in hand.

[1] Cf. *De Captivitate Babyl.*
[2] Cf. *Inst.* l. 4, c. 19, n. 18.
[3] xii, 28.

Outside of the fold of Christ's Catholic Church practically none admit Extreme Unction as a Christian sacrament. Some of the higher Ritualists, it is true, have tried to reintroduce the rite, and are trying to-day; but they have met with little success and little toleration from their coreligionists, because it is too "Roman." Yes, it is Roman; for it is Christian. Christ our blessed Lord is the Author of this sacrament.

The position of the Church with regard to this sacrament is clearly put before us by the Council of Trent, when it declares that this is, in a true and proper sense, a sacrament instituted by Christ our Lord and promulgated by St. James, and not merely a rite received from the Fathers or a human contrivance.[1] Similarly, the Church rejects the evolutionistic conception of the modernists, according to which the Apostle recommends some rite other than that which the Church holds as the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.[2] It is really and

1 Cf. Sess. xiv, can. 1.—Denz. n. 926.
2 Cf. "*Lamentabili.*"—Denz. n. 2048.

truly a Christian sacrament, conferring grace, forgiving sins (if there are any still unforgiven), comforting the sick, surrounding the last days of life with the strengthening rampart of divine assistance against the assaults of hell.

In the Apostolic anointing of the sick referred to by St. Mark, VI, 12, 13, the Church sees the foreshadowing of this sacrament. In St. Mark's account we see the Master sending the Twelve, two by two, upon their early mission, which was a trial and preparation for their future work. "And going forth they preached that men should do penance: and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."[1] This anointing was not, indeed, the sacrament which we are considering; for the Apostles were not yet priests (as they had to be for the administration of the sacrament), and, besides, this anointing was given to *all* the sick whether baptized or not. The healing, spoken of by St. Mark, was a miraculous manifestation of God's power, sealing the

[1] Mark vi, 12, 13.

Apostles' first mission with the stamp of divine approbation.

No; it was not the sacrament of Extreme Unction. But, it was the announcing, the insinuation, the foreshadowing of it, in as much as the material element was, as it were, consecrated for the future action of the Master's power. When Christ our Lord instituted the sacrament, we know not: but institute it He did, and it was promulgated by St. James in the well-known words: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."[1]

The Church does not say that St. James *explicitly* teaches the notion of a sacrament. She does not maintain that the merely *critical* study of the text, apart from the light of tradition, establishes with certainty that it is of a sacrament that the Apostle is speaking. But, she does hold that in

[1] St. James v, 14, 15.

these words, as understood by Christian tradition, St James promulgates the sacrament, instituted by Christ our Lord.

With all the reason in the world she holds this position, and with the infallibility which is above and beyond the earth. In the text referred to, St. James is speaking of those who are sick with a dangerous malady of a serious character; for the word implies just that in the original text. He exhorts those who are thus dangerously ailing to call in the priests of the Church, the priests of the regular hierarchy. From this two things are at once plain: first of all, there is no question of having recourse to the priests for the anointing as a mere matter of medical assistance; and secondly, neither is there question of an extraordinary and miraculous intervention, since the faithful are urged to have recourse to the priests without discrimination of persons, and the priests, as priests, did not *all* possess the charismatic gift of healing. It is clear, then, that there is reference to a sacred rite, within the ordinary power of the priestly ministers of Christ. This rite consists in

praying over the sick person and anointing him with oil "in the name of the Lord", that is, by the command and with the authority of the Master. And "the prayer of faith", the sacred rite, named as it is because its use proceeds from faith in the Lord, "shall save the sick man"; to the soul of the sufferer it will bring healing and salvation, and to the stricken body too, help and, if it be for the good of soul, health as well. "And the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

The effects of the sacrament we shall consider a little later; but here and now we see that this rite is a sensible sign which produces the grace of God. As a consequence, this unction is of Christ's institution, because it is given in the name of the Lord, and because the Apostle could not of his own authority join such a supernatural effect to the anointing. Christ alone, the Redeemer of men, the Founder of His Church, could link to a sensible rite such heavenly efficiency, which would last as long as the need, for which Christ's love de-

signed it, would be found in His Church—forever.

After the eighth century the testimony of tradition in regard to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is abundant and clear. Prior to that time the testimonies are fewer, for the reason that, before Venerable Bede's commentary on the Epistle of St. James, all the commentaries on this epistle (where such testimony would naturally appear) have been lost. For all that, references to it in conjunction with the Sacrament of Penance, of which it is the complement, are met with in the writings of Innocent in the beginning of the fifth century, and before that in the sacramentary of Serapion. In a word, there are more than sufficient testimonies of antiquity to show how utterly baseless is the rationalistic argument from the silence of olden days.

To all this may be added the reason from the prescriptive right of possession—an argument to which attention has been called before, for instance, when considering the Sacrament of Confirmation. The schismatical Greeks, who broke away from the

Church in the ninth century, hold to this sacrament as of Christ's institution. The Oriental heretics of earlier infidelity, even from the fifth century, bear witness to the same truth by their ritual and liturgical books, although the Nestorians and the Armenians neglect the sacrament in practice. And thus we are brought back far beyond the time, when, according to carping rationalistic critics, the rite was introduced into the Church by human authority. What was thus held away back in the days so distant, and held not as a something new, but as a holy trust from the past, is no innovation, but an Apostolic tradition, going back to the chosen ones of the Lord and through them to Him.

Yes, this sacrament is Christ's sacrament. We may well thank the thoughtful love of our dear Lord for providing for us this hallowed help, when we shall need that help so urgently.

It is intended to furnish us with a strong rampart of defense against the foe, as we draw near to the great parting in the fierce struggle of death. Death? Yes, we know

that we must face it as a stubborn fact of existence and as a penalty to be paid by sinful nature. Why should we try to blind ourselves to its reality or lull ourselves into the sleep that forgets it? Forget it! In the fading plants, in the dying day, in the changing seasons nature round about us is always telling the old, old story. History repeats the lesson in the passing of men and nations. Experience is dinning the truth into our ears and hearts with the tolling knell, the mournful cortège, the loss of friends and dear ones, the empty fireside at home, the sunken mound beneath the stars. From the moment when we began to live we began the march to the grave, to death's portals to the beyond. In the midst of life we are in the shadow of death.

And this death will come soon—very, very soon. Even the longest life looks so pathetically short, when measured by the standard of eternity. When we shall look back from beyond the gateway, our pilgrimage on earth will seem to us what it appeared to be to the inspired vision of the author of the Book of Wisdom: "All those things are

passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves: whereof when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel through the waters: or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air, and parting it by the force of her flight; she moved her wings and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterwards of her way: or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known: so we being born forthwith ceased to be."[1] As short and swift as the lightning-swoop of an eagle darting upon its prey,[2] our life will almost seem like a dream. Yet, it is no dream; for its reality is everlasting in its results.

And even as we measure time, the span of days which remains to any of us may be very, very short. Not only for the old and infirm, but for the young and hearty as well,

[1] v, 9–13.
[2] Cf. Job. ix, 26.

the grim, gray spectre waits. It stalks behind the many accidents which swell the roster of those who are marked: it hides behind the sickness which may come quite unexpectedly. This old earth of ours is truly beautiful and wholesome and gladdening; but in it the shadow of suffering and sorrow and death is always lurking. Yes, in the midst of life we are in death. It may come like a bolt from the blue in the unforeseen stroke of fatal accident; and against this our only sane preparation is the heeding of the Master's warning to be always ready to give an account of our stewardship. It may come in the gradual beating down of the ramparts of health and strength, even though we be surrounded by the affection of earth and the love of heaven. Yet, even in this case, as in any other, we shall have to fight the last fight.

Our whole life is a warfare on earth.[1] As we have so often had recalled to us by the warnings of heaven and by our own experience, it is not a peaceful journey to another world; it is not a calm drifting down life's

[1] Cf. Job vii, 1.

stream, flowing between flowering banks until it loses itself in the wide ocean of eternity. It is a march through the enemy's country, with watchful, hating foes skulking on every side, with ambuscades here and open attacks there, with never a truce through the passing years, with no armistice through our waking moments day or night.

And so too, the end of that life is not the last quiet step of a journey peacefully passed; nor is it the undisturbed landing from life's bark upon the pier of the haven of rest. It is the last fight in the warfare of life; it is the last stand of the warrior of the Old Guard; it is the last attack of the Crusader of Christ. "For," as the Council of Trent says, "although our adversary seeks and grasps occasions all through our life to destroy our souls by whatever means he may, still there is no time when he more vehemently strains every nerve of his guile to ruin us utterly and, if possible, to tear us from confidence in the divine mercy, than when he sees the end of life at hand." [1]

Upon this last fight hangs eternity. Vic-

[1] Sess. xiv.—Denz. n. 907.

tory means endless reward in the glory of the Conqueror Christ; defeat means undying despair with the rebel outcasts of hell. And more, our victory will mean an extension of the triumph of Christ; our defeat, the loss in our regard of the bloody expiation of Calvary. Surely, the archenemy of God and man, in his rabid hatred of all that is good, will most certainly take this last chance for the relentless fury of open attack or for the delusive snares of devilish cunning.

Of a truth, we may well shudder at the prospect of the battle to be waged for our poor souls. Yet, we must take courage and lift up our hearts; for we shall not be alone. Our angel guardian will be there. Please God! our blessed Mother Mary will be there to help us by her powerful intercession. The dear Christ will be there with the aid of His grace. There are many means of divine grace to undo the work of sin, to wipe out the evil of the past, to strengthen us in the struggle of agony.

All serious sin may have been purged away by the application of the merciful love

of the Savior. But even then, we need much special help. For, the fight is fiercer than ever before, and, even though we have not the stigma of traitors upon our souls to blast us forevermore, we are like soldiers with their backs to the wall, faint with the struggle of fighting, weak from the wounds received in other conflicts. Past sins have weakened these poor wills of ours; and, though sin be gone, there are left as a fearful danger in this decisive conflict the "relics" or remains of sin. The glance back at the life of unfaithfulness will make things look so black in the sombre light of devilish discouragement, as almost to destroy our trust in God's merciful forgiveness—unless, indeed, the sluggishness of numbed faculties drug the soul into a lack of perception of what is passing, and into an indifference to heaven and earth and hell, which may be as fatal as the wildest terror of apprehension. The pains of body may be so great as to tear away our attention from all thought of offering up the last oblation of submissive obedience to the justice of God. And the awful glimpse

into the future and into the great black depths of the beyond may well make the trembling spirit shudder and recoil from what lies beyond the dark gateway.

But against all this weakness of the faltering soul our sweet Savior gives us help in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Against the onrushing waves of diffidence and bleak despair this sacrament makes our confidence firm; against the cowardly flight from pain and conflict it brings courageous joy of heart; against the paralyzing trepidation in the face of the unknown future it gives calm trust in God.

Well, indeed, does Mother Church call the effect of this sacrament "the healing of the soul". Well does she say: "The effect(res) is the grace of the Holy Spirit, whose unction wipes away transgressions, if any still remain to expiated, and the remains of sin; and it lifts up and strengthens the soul of the sick man, exciting in him great confidence in the divine mercy. Lifted up by this, the sick man more easily bears the inconveniences and sufferings of illness, and more readily resists the temptations of the

demon."[1] Yes, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up."

This, then, is the first and most important effect of this holy sacrament—the infusion into the soul of the grace of the Spirit of God, so that even should there be in that soul any unexpiated sins, they will be wiped away (supposing always the proper dispositions of faith and sorrow), and the "relics" or remains of sins of old, which weaken the soul of God's warrior, will be counteracted by the new strength given from above for this conflict of conflicts. And thus, a Christian life is consummated and the soul is fully and finally disposed for entrance into the glory of God's eternal love, after the debt of temporal satisfaction shall have been paid.

Another effect of this sacrament—an effect which is most undoubtedly admitted by the Church, has reference to the body. As has been noted before, health is not the greatest of all good things and the procuring of health is not the chief concern of the

[1] Sess. xiv, c. 2.—Denz. n. 909.

religion of Christ. Still, in this sacrament, under the conditions fixed by God's good pleasure, provision is also made for the well-being of the body. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up." These words refer principally to the effect of the sacrament upon the soul; but, in a conditioned sense, they refer to the body too. Many and many a time the sick, disease-tortured body is helped by this sacrament and health is given back. If our experience has been at all wide, we ourselves have often seen this; and even physicians without faith have wonderingly admitted it. In a greater or less degree such will always be the effect, according as God sees fit. There is no question now of a miraculous restoration, though even that may be the result; but by God's special Providence the forces of nature and material remedies are helped to produce a result which otherwise they would not effect. We have no right to look for a miracle; but such a strengthening, even of the body, as may help the struggling soul in the great encounter, we may and

should long for in our own case, and we should dread to deprive our loved ones of.

And here I raise my voice in earnest, vigorous protest against the practice of some timid, thoughtless Catholics—a practice in which they would be almost criminal, if they fully realized what they were doing. Such foolish ones will not hear of any mention of the "last sacraments" or of "Extreme Unction" being made to their loved ones who are seriously sick. Not unfrequently, too, they are encouraged in their deplorable attitude by physicians who do not know the effect of God's sacred rites upon a child of the Church. "There is yet time," they say; "there is no immediate and pressing danger of a fatal termination of the disease. To speak of the sacraments or of anointing will frighten the sick one," and so forth and so on. So, they wait and wait; and they postpone the adminstration of Extreme Unction, until any bodily help from it would call for a real miracle. Meanwhile, through a blinded and misguided love, they have deprived the sufferer of even bodily aid, and they have

left his soul facing the fiercest battle of its existence deprived of the very succor which was provided by the loving Lord for this emergency. As for the fear of the sick one, why in heaven's name should any one fear the reception of a sacrament which bears within it Christ's Passion-won grace? The holy anointing is not a death-sentence passed upon a criminal. It is another love-token from the best of Masters, and it should be welcomed with an affection worthy of the love which drew it forth from the depths of His Sacred Heart.

The consideration of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction brings before us with forceful insistence the closing vigil with all that is connected with it; and from it all we may learn lessons of untold value. Death, grim visitor that it is and stern executioner of justice at the hands of God, is also a true friend to all those who cling to the Christ. Sad is its coming and bitter is the sharp stroke that severs earthly ties. To it we pay the debt of our mortality—a debt with the justice of God, incurred by the unfaithfulness of guilty sires. But, back of the stern

front of the Angel of Death there is a gleam of affection; behind the summons which calls us away to render the account of our stewardship there sounds a warning, sweetened by the love that is above the earth and the earthly. If we would but heed the warning and learn the lesson, half the sorrow and all the terror of death would be lost in the calm confidence of a loving welcome home.

And the warning and the lesson is this, that we keep our souls from sin. Sin not! That is the warning and the lesson of death. We know that we may die at any time; and when that time will come, we do not know. But this we know, that if, when the stroke of death cuts us down, we are in the wild revolt of mortal sin, naught remains for us but the eternal dungeon of the anger of God. Therefore, as we love God, nay, as we value our own true and eternal interests, we cannot be mad enough to take the awful chance of utter failure. Would to God that we could see the Angel of Death, when the crisis finds us standing on the brink of mortal sin; when the fierce gusts of

passion hurl themselves upon us and join with the demon power of our relentless foes to dash us into the abyss! Would that we could see, back of the laughing face of alluring sin, the hollow orbs that speak of the tomb! Would that we could look beyond the fair appearance of the transgression of injustice or pride or lust or any evil satisfaction, and gaze upon the stern figure of God's messenger summoning us to the reckoning! Sin—Death—Hell. No, no; never that! And it will never be that, if we hearken to the warning voice of death, the hard, harsh, solemn friend, but truest of the true.

Another warning (or the same warning in another form) is this, not to put off our return to God or the accomplishment of duties that lie upon us. Disconcerting and appalling is the folly of those who, with a conscience black with the foulness of unexpiated sins, quietly and condescendingly say that they will return to God and will fix things right with Him before they die—next year, perhaps, but not now. They do not know when they will hear the words

thundered into their ears: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee."[1] If we hearkened to the voice of death, we should not thus jeopardize our eternal interests; we should not allow our poor hearts to be so wrapped up with the things of time, as to give little or no thought to the great affair of eternity; we should not neglect the opportunities of doing good and of laying up for ourselves a treasure in heaven; we should work "whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."[2]

With God's help, let us learn these lessons. And, whilst we ponder over the wonderful ways of God and over His loving assistance for us in the last great hour of our need, let us thank Him for His goodness and let us resolve to avail ourselves of it, if we may. I say, if we may; for, with regard to the sweet and strong aid of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, we do not know whether we shall be so blessed as to have it.

[1] Luke xii, 20.
[2] John ix, 4.

We may have to meet our God after the swift passing of a sudden death. If so, God grant that we may not be unprepared! For, "from a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord, deliver us." [1] That it may not be unprepared, let us act upon the Master's warning to watch and pray, since we know not the day or the hour.[2] We may have to fight the last, dread battle without the help of loved and loving ones, without the ministration of Mother Church—all alone, except for the company and the strong aid of the dear Christ and of our heavenly helpers. If it is to be so, God will be with us, and all will be well, if we do our part.

But, because we fear our weakness and because we dread the effect upon our halting souls of the infidelities of the past, we may well pray for the blessing of the last sacraments in our great, final struggle. May God grant to us all the blessing of the aid of the sacraments! The last confession will wipe away the stains from our weary souls. The last anointing will strengthen our fail-

[1] Litany of Saints.
[2] Cf. Matt. xxv, 13.

ing hearts and raise up our drooping spirits with unfaltering confidence and courage. And then too, (no, we could not forget *that*) near the heart and in the hands of His priest the dear Lord will come to us, to be our help upon the way, our Viaticum for the last, lone journey. Yet, not lone; for, He will be with us, the dear Christ, our Captain and our King. He will fight the last fight with us and for us. He will keep us in the shelter of His love. He will be with us as we close our eyes upon the things of earth. And upon His sweet and beloved face we shall look with confiding affection, as we stand before Him in judgment.

God grant that it may be thus with each and every one of us! And if by God's all-loving mercy it is, then truly we may say with some of the Saints of God, "I did not know it was so sweet a thing to die;" then may we exult, as did the great St. Paul for himself and for all the elect of God, that the grave has been conquered and that an eternal victory has been won over death, mankind's relentless foe.[1]

[1] Cf. I Cor. xv, 54, 55.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOURCE OF SACRED POWER

Church's care for man from cradle to grave, and beyond. This, especially through Sacraments. Five concerned principally with individual: two, with corporate good. Holy Orders is source of Sacred Power.—Position of Orders in Church. Nature of the Kingdom: its three-fold mission. Apostles and successors not only teachers and rulers, but priests. Priesthood perpetual: perpetuated by this sacrament.—Institution: Church's definition; Scriptural references; Fathers; prescription.—Effects: grace; seal, with special participation in Christ's priesthood.—Dignity of priesthood. Qualities of true priest. Applications and conclusions.

When we speak of Christ's Church in her relations to us, it is no wonder that we should use the sweet and endearing term of "mother", as we name her holy Mother Church. By the merciful plan of the loving Savior, she is just that. She has all the tenderness of a mother who knows the clay of which we are wrought. She has all the enduring affection which is drawn from the

Heart of Christ. She is with us all through our life, in every phase of it, in every crisis, in every danger, in every sorrow and in every joy.

Hardly have we opened our eyes to the things of this world, when she brings us forth to God at the sacred font of Baptism; children of earth for so short a while, she makes us the sons and daughters of God and the heirs of heaven forever. When we have been stained with the dust and dirt of travel, she washes us clean. When we have, or if we have, defiled the white robe of Baptism, she gives it back washed in the streams of Christ's blood, that flow in the Sacrament of Penance. Nay, by the power of Him who gave her only son back to the widowed mother of Naim and who called Lazarus forth from the grave, she brings us back from death and the corruption of transgression. In the Sacrament of Confirmation she strengthens our weakness and makes us firm in the loyalty of true soldiers of Christ. She feeds us with the food of strength, as she leads us to the heavenly banquet, where we are refreshed with the

body and blood of the glorified Victim of the world.

And so, she goes through life with the children of her love, teaching, ruling, sanctifying; always ready, in our woe, to help with the solace of patience, and, in the thrill of our joy, to guard against the folly of forgetting whence our blessings come. And when our day is drawing to a close and the shadows are lengthening and we are going down into the valley, she is with us still to comfort us and to shield us against the terrors of the dread passage; she is at our side to aid us in the last fierce fight for our Leader against all the attacks of earth and hell. Out beyond the borderland she follows us, when we have heard the last call; her prayers accompany us before the judgment seat of God and bring refreshment, light, and peace to the "Prisoners of the King," who in purgatorial pains are paying their debt to the justice of the Lover of men.

In all this motherly solicitude of hers, exhortation and solemn teaching with infallible voice have a large and necessary

part; her ruling in the realm of the soul keeps her children united with her divine Spouse. Yet, withal, it is the golden chain of her sacred sacraments, which directly binds the souls of men with their Father who is in heaven.

The sacraments which have been considered up to the present are those that have more direct reference to the good of the Church's members, who form the mystic body of Christ. The two others of the seven of the sacramental system look first to the common good and to the continuance of the Church of Christ. For, the one makes provision for the ceaseless flowing of the stream of sacramental grace; the other, for the peopling of the City of God on earth with the citizens whose final home is the eternal Kingdom of God in heaven. Let us here and now dwell with thoughtful minds and grateful hearts on the first of these two remaining sacraments, namely, Holy Orders, which may be called the Source of Sacred Power.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is closely bound up with the very constitution of the

Church. Holy Orders refers, in the first place, to the different grades among the members of the Church, to the rulers and the ruled; and, in the second place, to the sacrament for the transmission of priestly powers.

It will, therefore, be useful for us to cast a hurried glance at the very make-up of this "Kingdom of God" on earth. As we know very well, our blessed Lord's chief work here below was the meeting and conquering of sin and death. For, He was first and foremost the Redeemer of mankind, who was to buy us back from doom and to blot out the handwriting of the decree against us, as He affixed it to the cross. But, during that sublime life of His He was to teach the truths which were to help men's souls forevermore; and, before His earthly mission was accomplished, He was to provide for the transmission of His revelation and for the application of His merits to the souls of all who should come after Him to the day of doom.

Now, He provided for all this by the establishment of the "Kingdom of God" on

earth, which is His Church. He preached, indeed, the subjection of the soul to the love and service of the Father; but this was not all of His Kingdom. He bade His own lift up their eyes and hearts and hopes to the great and dread day, when He would come in the might and power of His majesty, to judge all mankind and then to enter with His elect into the joys of His eternal glory; but neither was this all of His Kingdom. To bring men into the kingdom of subjection to the Father and to prepare them for the endless day of His own glorious reign, He established the organized body of His faithful followers under the spiritual chieftains whom He provided for their good.

I know full well that rationalists and modernists do not admit all this. I know, too, that many of the Christian churches do not hold to the truth, established by the Master, as He walked the earth and preached the Kingdom of God and, for the continuation of His own sacred mission, founded that Kingdom as an organized society with various functions for different members. I know all this, and I would gladly dwell up-

on these points, even in controversy, with the hope of bringing the brightness and the warmth of the light of God's truth to those who do not see. But, this is not the time for such a discussion.[1] We are looking at the work of the Master, not arguing about it, except in so far as the very contemplation is a lesson of truth.

So, the dear Master gathered His disciples about Him and taught them the way to truth and life. From the number of His followers He selected twelve, who were to be closer to Him than all others, and He called them Apostles. These He fostered and trained in His holy company. These He sent forth upon temporary missions to the children of Israel. These were His friends, His little children; and to them He gave a deeper insight into the truths of salvation. He promised to Simon, whose name He changed to Peter, "the rock," that upon him He would build His Church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it and that He would give to him the keys of

[1] For fuller consideration of these points, see author's *"Christ's Masterpiece."*

the kingdom of heaven. He pledged Himself to make the Apostles partakers of the power that was His very own by the gift of the Father.

Then came the day of the dreadful climax of redemption; and on the cross He paid to the justice of God the price of pain and blood. During the forty days after His resurrection, whilst He filled with strong love that flock of His which had been scattered, when He, the Shepherd, had been struck, He completed His arrangments for His Church, the Kingdom of God.

To Peter He gave the power which had been promised to him as the foundation-stone, the bearer of the keys of the Kingdom, the shepherd of the flock, the ruler of the City of God. Then, to the Twelve, the body of chosen, trained, elevated, heaven-endowed representatives of His, marshalled under the primacy of Peter, He communicated the great mission of authoritatively teaching every child of earth until the end of time. The great commission was given thus: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." [1] "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." [2]

There was their mission and their commission. To teach with infallible authority, to sanctify, to rule the souls of men with power from on high, with the sanction of heaven or hell for the acceptance or rejection of their authoritative ministry. They were to work as an organized social body, spiritual, yet of earth, and were to labor here below for the sanctification of the souls ransomed by the Christ. Through this ministration of theirs all who would have part in the redemption of the Savior were to be brought into His one fold, were to be made members of His mystic body, were to be ruled and sanctified in that body, until the

[1] Matt. xviii, 18–20.
[2] Mark xvi, 16.

Lord would call them home. And this living, teaching, sanctifying, ruling society was to last until the end of days. "Behold," said the Lord, "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

The sanctification of men unto eternal life was to be the end for which the Church was to labor, as it was the purpose of the loving Lord, who had come to save that which was lost [1] and that men might have life and might have it more abundantly.[2] The sacred teaching of the Master's revelation and the heaven-sanctioned ruling of the soul were to result indirectly in sanctification, through the soul's efforts to correspond with the designs of God. Yet, directly too, holiness was to come to the spirit of man, by the sacramental rites instituted by our Lord—and "all days, even to the consummation of the world."

The transmission of jurisdiction and of the authoritative power of teaching was to be secured by the succession of the bishops,

[1] Cf. Matt. xviii, 11.
[2] Cf. John x. 10.

who would stand in the place of the Apostles, continuing their mission of teaching and ruling mankind.

But the Apostles were not only teachers and rulers. They were priests; they were bishops, with the plenitude of the priesthood. The chief powers of the priesthood touch principally two of the sacraments which we have already dwelt upon, namely, Penance and Holy Eucharist. "Every high priest," thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "(is) taken from among men (and) ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins."[1] On the evening of the Resurrection the power to forgive sins was communicated to the Apostles by the Savior, when He breathed upon them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[2] And as for sacrifice, they were to offer up the Eucharistic sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. For,

[1] v, 1.
[2] John xx, 22, 23.

on the eve of His sacred Passion, after He had instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, the sacrifice of clean oblation, He commissioned them to do as He had done, saying: "Do this for a commemoration of me." [1] Yes, they were priests, with the plentitude of the priesthood and with the means of transmitting the same sacred power to those who were to carry on their hallowed work until the second coming of the Lord.

After all that has been considered in studying the other sacraments, the perpetuation of the power of sanctifying men through the holy rites of Christ's institution, and especially through the Sacrament of Penance and the sacrifice of the altar, needs no further proof. In fact, the only ones who are ranged in the opposition of denial are those who reject the pardoning power, given by the Christ to His own, and the sacrificial character of the Eucharistic oblation.

Where there is a sacrifice, there must be priests. For, by the very voice of nature, speaking through the long ages of the past,

[1] Luke xxii, 19.

the function of a priest is shown to imply sacrifice. Priest and sacrifice are correlative terms. Once more, then, given the sacrifice of propitiation of the New Law to apply the merits of Calvary to our souls and to continue to the end of time the expression of our dependence on the sovereignty of God, there must be a priesthood in the Church of Christ. And by consequence, there must be a means of perpetuating this priesthood as long as the Church shall be amongst the children of men to do the work of the Redeemer.

Although this sacred power might have been transmitted without the aid of a sacramental rite, had Christ so willed; still, as a matter of fact, because of the dignity of the priestly office, our blessed Lord instituted a special sacrament to confer the power of the priesthood and to bestow the graces needed for the exercise of the all-heavenly functions of those whom He thus associated with Himself in the very mysteries of God.

This sacrament is the sacrament of Holy Orders. The sacrament of Holy Orders, or

of Ordination, is the sacrament of the New Law (instituted, of course, by our Lord Himself), by which spiritual power is conferred for the consecration, oblation and administering of the body and blood of Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and for other spiritual functions. Its fulness is found in the episcopate, the body of those who, with the plenitude of the priesthood, can through the Sacrament of Ordination be fathers in God unto others, who enter into the same sublime powers.

The strongest reasons show that Christ instituted this sacred sign. For Catholics the clearest of all reasons is found in the teaching of Mother Church. In the Council of Trent she teaches that "sacred ordination is truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord, and is neither a mere human invention thought out by men unskilled in ecclesiastical matters, nor only a certain rite of choosing the ministers of God's word and of the sacraments." [1]

Besides, ordination is of Christ's institution, because it is a sensible sign which

[1] Sess. xix, can. 3.—Denz. n. 963.

confers grace; and such a connection between external rite and supernatural effect can have none but the God-Man for its author. The external rite is often referred to in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul; and the rite is ordination or the imposition of hands together with prayer. In the Acts we read of Paul and Barnabas: "And when they had ordained to them priests in every church" (and, according to the original Greek text, *by the imposition of hands*), "and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed."[1] St. Paul says to Timothy: "For which cause I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands"[2]: "neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesy, with the imposition of the hands of the priesthood."[3] These very same words of Holy Scripture show the spiritual effect of grace consequent upon the external rite, namely, the power of the priesthood and

[1] Acts xiv, 22.
[2] II Tim. i, 6.
[3] I Tim. iv, 14.

the grace to carry out the duties of the sublime office: "for God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and of sobriety."[1] The grace of God has been given by the external ceremony which brings the prerogative of the priesthood and produces the fruits of fortitude and charity and self-restraint.

As in the case of Confirmation, in the early days of the Church, the coming of the Holy Ghost was often accompanied with marvels from on high; so too, from the imposition of hands in ordination there not unfrequently followed charismatic gifts, which, however, were not the essence of the sacramental rite. In later years miracles were not always to be found with the same striking frequency and splendor as in the days of the first promulgation of the New Dispensation. Still, the Kingdom was to stand unto the end. And so, the dear Christ who consecrated the members of His mystic body by the solemn sacredness of sacramental power and who sealed His soldiers in the warfare of life with the sign

[1] II Tim. i, 7.

of the Spirit, also hallowed by the supernatural efficacy of the sacrament of Ordination those who were to be the dispensers of the very mysteries of God, the pastors of the flock, the leaders of the army, the partakers of His own special priesthood of salvation.

To go over the testimony of the Fathers of the Church to the sacramental nature of this ordination of Christian priests would be instructive and enlightening; but it is so clear and unmistakable and undeniable, that we may pass it by, merely recalling the fact that it is voluminous and decisive.

Again, the argument of prescriptive possession, to which reference has been made in the treatment of other sacraments, gives its unshakable support to the cause of truth. Back through the years we trace the unanimous consent of the Christian world about the existence of the seven sacraments of Mother Church—and of these sacraments Orders is one. The Oriental schismatics from the ninth century and the Eastern heretics from the fifth century join their voice of testimony to the grand chorus of

constant and universal consent, and proclaim to all who are not willingly deaf that the doctrine and the sacred rite of Holy Orders are from the Apostles of the Master and through them from Christ Himself.

And thus, with all justice may the Church say that the fact of Christ's institution of Ordination, or Holy Orders, as a sacrament is vouched for, not only by her own infallible utterance, but, (and this, for those who will not yet hearken to the words of her motherly teaching) by the testimony of Holy Scripture, by Apostolic tradition, and by the unanimous consent of the Fathers. [1]

A few remarks now about the effect of this sacrament. All the sacraments confer the grace of God, either in the first instance or in greater abundance. As one of its effects, Holy Orders gives an increase of this glorious gift of God.

Besides, like Baptism and Confirmation, it imparts an indelible sacramental character. As we considered before, Baptism marks us as members of the family of Christ our Lord. The resemblance is one

[1] Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. xix, c. 3.—Denz. n. 959.

of nature, through the sanctifying grace with which Baptism floods the soul: and the likeness is also unto a participation in the very priesthood of Jesus Christ, to the extent of a capacity for having part in the sacraments of the Redeemer—and this through the sacramental character. In Confirmation we are likened unto the Leader Christ in strength in battling for the living faith: we are made the brave soldiers of the cross, to defend divine revelation and to fight for the worship of God.

But, besides these general participations in the priesthood of the great High Priest of mankind, to those who are consecrated by the sacred sacrament of Ordination there comes a likeness to Him which gives them part in the special priesthood of Jesus Christ. Nay, in the exercise of that priesthood, these ministers of the Victim-Priest of Calvary act for Him and with Him, in His name and with His power. To this sacramental character, which will never pass away, there is bound during life the sublime power, which is given to them as coöperators with Jesus,—"the power of con-

secrating, offering, and administering the body and blood of Christ our Savior; of forgiving and retaining sins;"[1] and of performing other duties of their state. All these duties refer, indirectly at least, to the Blessed Sacrament. And to fulfill these duties, from Ordination they have the right to the actual helps of God, which will be given when needed for the actions of their sublime destiny.

Without a doubt, the destiny is sublime, and the dignity is great beyond the power of words to express. Although it is a priest of God who tells you of the wondrous and surpassing excellence of the participation in the priesthood of Christ, he can do so without the slightest reproach of self-aggrandizement. For, none knows better than the priest himself, how unworthy he is of the majesty of his vocation; none is more ready than he to give back to God the glory of it all, whilst he clasps to his inmost soul the realization that it is the work of the Almighty. With the blessed Mother Mary he can proclaim the greatness of God

1 Council of Trent, Sess. xix, c. 1.—Denz. n. 957.

and the littleness of man, and he too may say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. Because he hath regarded the humility,"[1] the lowliness, of His servant. "He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is his name."[2]

It cannot be repeated too often that the fundamental notion of priesthood is sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ's ministering priests is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is a true sacrifice; it represents, commemorates, continues and renews the bloody oblation of the cross of Calvary.

Whether the sacrifice consist in this, that in the Mass Christ, all living as He is, is placed beneath the sacramental veils in the condition of a lifeless thing, the very food of man; or whether it consist in this, that He is mystically sacrificed, by the very fact that, although by virtue of "concomitance" the whole Christ is present under both species, still by virtue of the words of

[1] Luke i, 46–48.
[2] Luke i, 49.

consecration only His body is present under the appearance of bread, and only His blood under the species of wine: in either case, the words of consecration are as a sacrificial knife, and upon the altar Christ, the Victim of the world, is mystically immolated. And the one who works this marvel of marvels is the priest, uttering the sacred words of consecration with the voice of Christ. Thus the priest offers to the majesty of God a sacrifice, worthy of the Godhead, for the expiation of the transgressions of a sin-stained world; he holds in his poor hands of flesh the very body of the Son of God; he drinks the chalice of the blood of the Victim Christ; he gives the Eucharistic God to the faithful ones who come to the banquet-table of love divine.

Were not envy, even of holy things, excluded from the kingdom of God's glorifying love, the very angels of God might well envy such a dignity. For, whilst they are only ministering spirits, sent to the dear ones of God and carrying out the behests of the Most High, the priest commands the

King of the angels, brings Him to the altar, carries Him where he will in the ministry of salvation.

From this power with regard to the real body of Christ comes the priest's power with reference to the mystical body of the Savior, namely, the faithful of Holy Church, whom he is to prepare for the Blessed Eucharist. To the helpless he is to preach the word of God and bring the solace of the merciful Saviour; he is to soothe them in the sorrows and trials and injustices of earth, and to lift up their eyes to the hope of a supernal and everlasting joy. He is to lift the burden of sin from souls bowed down beneath the weight of iniquity and almost crushed by the monstrous mass of evil that is dragging them down into the black depths of despair. With the power of the Son of man to whom all judgment has been given in heaven and on earth, he is to heal the leper from his death-in-life; into the glad light of God's clean day he is to call forth the soul that was rotting in the tomb of corrupting sin; he is to give back to the arms of Mother Church many a son and

daughter, whom she mourned as dead, and to the fatherly heart of God many and many a prodigal, who had wasted his substance living riotously.

The dignity of the priesthood, then, is great beyond comparison. It is truly ineffable. And the reason is that the priest is *one* with Christ; he is another Christ. Yes, the dear Christ, "for that he continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood" [1] and offers "one sacrifice for sins." [2] As a consequence, He is the one, only High Priest of the New Law, and His ministering priests are priests because they are one with Him in their sublime ministrations.

For this lofty dignity, all should have the deepest reverence, warmed with the glow of holy love. If God's choice to this hallowed vocation has fallen on one whom you love, rejoice and revere. If, in the future, the eyes of the Master should rest on one to whom you have given earthly life; if in the ear and heart of the young man, a son of yours, there should sound the call from on

[1] Hebr. vii, 24.
[2] Hebr. x, 12.

high, summoning him to the mountain of sacrifice, even to the unstained Calvary of the altar; do not hesitate, do not repine, do not refuse the sacrifice, do not count the cost. Your loved one is blessed, and you are blessed in his hallowing. To give him up may mean to relinquish many a worldly hope and ambition. It may cost the abandonment of cherished projects. But, sacrifices just as great are sometimes made for an earthly bauble, which in its achievement brings only the hunger of unsatisfied desire, whilst here there is question of God's call, which blesses beyond the blessing of earth.

From the relation of the priest to Christ's real and mystic body come the qualities which the priest must strive to make his own. The Christ, the great High Priest of mankind, became like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted, in order that He might sympathize with our sorrows by having personal experience of our lot. And it is this same sympathy for souls that marks the true priest of the Master. The Epistle to the Hebrews, in the words already quoted,

says: "Every high priest (is) taken from among men, (and) is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God." And the reason why the priest is taken from among *men* is given: "Who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err." And why? "Because he himself also is compassed with infirmity."

And so, human beings, men like ourselves, and not angels of God, are made the priests of the great High Priest. The angel, mighty spirit as he is, could never know from personal experience what it is to be weak and tried and tempted by the things of earth, which draw the thoughtless and the foolish away from their only good, from the God who is their all. But the priest can and does; and his heart must go out to those who, for all their frailty, do love the Lord or wish to love Him. And, looking up from the wandering little ones of Christ to the dear Master who died that they might live, the priest consecrates himself entirely to the Lord and to the brethren of the Christ. Not that he does not count the cost; not that he does not know that life

for him will hold many dreary stretches of human loneliness without the solace of human comfort. He does. But, he knows that the lonely Lord in the tabernacle is worthy of more than he can give up for Him in giving all. Not because he loves his near and dear ones less, does he give himself to a consecration that will know neither wife nor child; but because he loves the dear Lord more, and those for whom the Savior died. So, to Christ and to the brothers and sisters of Christ and to those who must be brought into the family of God's love he gives his whole life.

When the feeble life of the little babe has opened on earth, the priest is at hand to lift it up to the higher life of God, as he pours upon the infant head the waters of Baptism. He is in the tribunal to guide the unstained away from the paths of evil and to raise up the one who has fallen. He is at the altar of the Lord to lay the Eucharistic God for the first time upon the tongue of the little innocent, and day after day to give to the children of the Father the bread of the strong. With the benediction of

heaven he blesses the two loving hearts, plighting their troth before the altar of God, and sends them forth upon the new way which they will henceforth walk together, strong in the consecration of their love. He is by the side of the sick with the comfort of prayers and with the strengthening anointing for the great struggle before the passing. He chants the Church's requiem over the remains of the departed, that are cold in death, and he follows their souls out beyond the portals of life with the sweet pleading of prayerful supplication. Always and everywhere he is at the service of the faithful, laboring for them, cheering them, helping them—even at times at the peril of his life; for life must count for little, when a child of God is holding out pleading hands for the aid which the priest alone can bring.

For all this, we should have sympathy for the priest. We should have gratitude, though he does not work for that. We should have love, though he looks to the great, enthralling love of the High Priest. For the sake of what his life is as a whole

we should easily forgive him any little surface faults. We should—and this we should never forget—we should pray for him that he fail not. We should hold up the hands of the prophet of God, that they may not fall, whilst he is pleading for the souls of those who are fighting against evil; else, the powers of darkness may prevail over the fainting faithful, just as the enemy prevailed against Israel when Moses wearied in his supplication with God. We should pray earnestly and fervently for the priest that he may be true to the Christ and to the lofty obligations of his sacred calling.

But, some priests have fallen and have been untrue to the Master? Yes; some have fallen. And the fall has been terrible; for the higher the elevation, the more fearful the fall, if one slips over the precipice. The more reason this, for pleading with the blessed Lord for His priests. Some have fallen? Yes; but it is a tale that shocks the more, because (thank God!) of its rare occurrence. Some have fallen? Yes; but there was a Judas even among the Twelve

whom the Master chose—a devil, who went out from the midst of Christ's own, and, for the price of a slave, sold the God-Man to the enemies who were ravening for His blood. Yet, such falls cannot lower the dignity of the office of the priesthood itself, nor dim the hallowed worth and the noble heroism of those who, by God's help, are true to their sublime vocation.

Let us recapitulate. In founding His Church, Christ established an authoritative body of those who unto the end of time were to teach and rule the faithful and to sanctify them unto eternal life. In the successors of the Apostles this sacred hierarchy is continued in the Church. For the perpetuation of the power of the priesthood Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders or Ordination. This sacrament imparts the spiritual seal of its sacramental character. and gives the power of consecrating the Eucharist and the power of forgiving sins; it bestows an increase of sanctifying grace upon the Lord's anointed ones, and the right to the actual graces which

they need in order to be true to the duties which lie upon those who, with the Christ, are the saviors of mankind.

Such, then, is the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We should thank God for it; for, as the Source of Sacred Power, it is of incalculable advantage to each and every one of the children of the Church. Without it there would be no Church, and without the Church there would be no incorporation with Christ into the mystic body which sustains our life in God. Without it there would be no administration of the sacraments, which are the channels of God's grace to our souls. Without it we would look upon a world from which the sun had been blotted out, as the Eucharistic God was torn away from His perishing children. Without it we would look from a sorrow-crushed earth to a terrible future, deprived of those aids to our weakness by which God's love brightens the way home.

Yes, we should thank God for this sacrament. And let us show our appreciation of it by our reverent presence at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays, even

though it mean no little effort, and as frequently as we can during the week—and the frequency will increase, as our realization of the great oblation grows deeper and stronger. Let us show our appreciation by often and lovingly receiving Holy Communion, as our share in the unbloody Calvary. Let us do what lies in our power to spread the Kingdom of God, which our High Priest made perennial by the effusion of His precious blood. And for Christ's priests let us have reverence and gratitude and love and the loyalty of prayer, that they may be, as Christ meant them to be, His ministers unto salvation, each one another Christ.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSECRATION OF LOVE

Matrimony for good of race. Two-fold aspect.—Natural institution for benefit of mankind; for care of offspring. Two chief qualities of marriage as natural contract: unity versus polygamy; indissolubility versus divorce. May entail hardship for individual; necessary for general good. Failure of nature; pagans; Jews.—Christian sacrament: St. Paul's words; tradition; testimony of churches. Consecration of Love. State intrusion.—Effects: unity; indissolubility (Church's brave stand); grace, sanctifying and actual. Elevation of mankind since Christian dispensation.—Conclusion.

After dwelling in turn upon each of those sacraments which are designed, first and foremost, for the good of the individual, we have begun to deal with the two which look principally to the public good. Holy Orders, the Source of Sacred Power, makes for the propagation of the rights and powers of Mother Church and for the sanctification of the mystic body of Christ, rather than for the advantage of those who, by its re-

ception, are taken up into a share of the very priesthood of Christ. We shall close our considerations by occupying ourselves with the other sacrament which under another aspect looks, in the first instance, to the common weal.

Matrimony, or marriage, is for the propagation of the race. Its purpose is, that the world may be peopled with the children of men, who are to be the sons and daughters of God, citizens first of this old earth of ours, but finally and especially citizens of the eternal City of God.

The word "marriage" brings before our minds and hearts the picture of some of the sweetest joys of earth. It speaks of the family, of home. It recalls sacred associations with loved ones, which linger in the heart, no matter how much the wanderer may be separated by distance or time from childhood's memories. It sounds in the depths of affection the sacred name of "father" and the sweeter word of "mother." It brings back the days of innocence and recalls the happiness that was unsullied by the evil curse of sin. Marriage—Family—

Home: these bespeak the design of God with regard to the race.

We shall study marriage as a natural institution and as a sacramental rite of the Christian dispensation. Marriage, or matrimony, may mean either the contract, the formality, the ceremony, or (as we shall see) the sacrament, by which the conjugal union is formed; or it may mean that union itself as an abiding condition. In this last sense, it is the legitimate union of man and woman—a union, therefore, sanctioned by the will of God and implying mutual rights as to marital relations, life in common, and an enduring state. Now, it is such a union as this that is willed by the Lord God.

Man has an inborn inclination to self-preservation. He clings to life with stubborn pertinacity. Even the suicide's folly or despair does not disprove the reality of this yearning to live; but only tells of the cowardice which fears the burden of misfortune. And even in the Saints who long to be with Christ, the shrinking from dissolution of mortal being is another telling of the same story of the love of life. Now,

second in strength only to this instinct for self-preservation is the inclination of procreation for the conservation of the race. As the first impulse is given for the good of the individual, so the second is given for the good of the race. Hence, in God's designs this inclination of procreation may be used and satisfied only in such a way as may make for the betterment of mankind, and not for such individual gratification as would be the undoing of the race. It is to be ruled by *law*; and law looks to the common good, to which private good must yield. Yes, in spite of the egotism of rampant individualism, which clamors loudly and always for its own gratification, law looks beyond the individual man: it touches each one, but for the good of all. And the law of nature, and therefore of nature's God, demands between man and woman a union which is enduring.

What is weaker or more helpless than the new-born babe? It has the great dignity of a human being; yet it is weaker than most living things that are brought into existence, and is more dependent upon others.

What care must be given to it for the support and development of its material well-being and for its spiritual growth! How much more loving help is called for, that this life, throbbing with instincts and burning with inclinations, may grow into nature's greatest glory, a true man or woman! Now, as nature wills that the little one should have life through its parents, so too does nature, and nature's God, will that the child should have its education from those same parents, to whom under God the child owes its being. This education means the physical, intellectual, and moral development of the child; and God's will, manifested by nature itself, is that the child should look to the parents for this development.

Let those who will, prate about promiscuity being the natural condition of mankind with regard to sex-relations. They speak thus, not only in spite of the records of history which do not substantiate their claims; but against the very dignity of human nature itself. Let them degrade the relations between the noblest of God's creatures of earth to a level below that of the

brute beasts. Let them, according to their atheistic and materialistic theories, welcome such a position as scientific—which it is not. But, let them not dare to say that the degradation of man and the defilement of woman and the ruin of childhood are natural, in the sense of being a provision of God.

Natural? It is no more natural than sin is natural, which appeals to the lowest inclinations of an unrestrained licentiousness. That only is natural in the true sense of the word, which is in accordance with the dignity of human nature, taken in its entirety with all its relations to God its Creator, to its fellowmen, and to the right subordination within itself of the lower to the higher powers. That which is only a perversion of the true parental instinct; that which wars on the welfare of children and the good of the race; that which arouses in man or woman the sleeping tiger of jealousy, only to contradict it—that is not a part of the design of an all-wise and all-good Creator and Ruler of the world.

The enduring union between the parents

is necessary for the offspring. But, beyond this, for the parents themselves it is fraught with immense advantages for the development of the noblest qualities and activities of soul. By reason of their mutual duties towards the children born of the marriage-union, the relation of the sexes is ennobled. It is raised above the imperious demands of mere animal instincts, and a real union of souls is established. An equality of dignity is made firm, and both man and woman draw profit in the line of individual perfection, of devotedness and self-sacrifice, of abnegation and labor, in this schooling against the inertness and selfishness of egotism.

The two chief properties of marriage, considered even according to the institution of nature—and as such we are still considering it—are its unity and its indissolubility.

The first deviation from the typical form of marital relation is polygamy. This may take one of two forms, being the union either of several husbands with one wife, or of several wives with one husband. The first form is more opposed to the intentions

of the Lord of nature than is the second. Yet, even this second, namely, the union of several wives with one husband, is so far removed from the ideal of conjugal union, that it cannot be allowed by any authority less than the divine, and is not in full accord with the dignity of human nature in its fullest and noblest sense.

Besides the evils of jealousy and heart-burnings which it brings with it with practical necessity, it results in the enslavement and degradation of woman. From her degradation, the lowering of the nobility of manhood ensues, as the sad records of history but too lamentably prove.

No human power can allow a condition from which, with fatal necessity, evils such as these flow. The absolute dominion of God can permit it to avoid greater evils, or because His divine Providence prevents the wrongs which otherwise would connaturally arise, whilst at the same time other and more pressing needs of the human race are subserved. But, no power less than His can justify it. It goes against the equality of the natural contract, which should be the

same on both sides; and nothing less than the divine dominion can make such an inequality lawful.

Not the least of the benefits which the world owes to Christianity is not only that the Church abolished or diminished polygamy among the barbarous nations whom she converted from the brutal following of depraved inclinations, but that she preserved the West from the fearful wave of Mahomedan polygamy. It is owing to Christ's religion that woman, instead of being a slave or a toy, is reverenced as she is by all who have not lapsed into the views of pagan corruption. And man, too, has been correspondingly elevated; for, he is seldom far above or far below the level of the position accorded to woman. If he treats her as a plaything of passion, he degrades himself to the stature of the beast: if he places her upon an eminence of sacredness, which is hers by Christ's renewal of the original ordinance of God and especially by the Master's hallowing, man too is lifted up to his proper grandeur.

Another property of marriage, even as

an institution of nature, is its indissolubility by any authority less than the divine. Whilst for just cause there may be a separation of the married parties, still the severing of the marriage-bond so that they may contract other alliances during the lifetime of the first partner, is not in accord with the intentions of the natural law. Successive polygamy is hardly less detrimental to the true interests of the race than is simultaneous polygamy. We need not here enter upon a lengthy discussion of the evils that spring forth from the polluted source of divorce. Families ruined; children cheated of their natural protectors, not through the trials of God's mysterious Providence, but through human malice; the foundations of domestic life, which is the basis of all true national greatness, unsettled—these are some of the offspring of this prolific parent of horrors. Where divorce flourishes, it brings with it a lowered conception of conjugal fidelity; for, it is not true to say that the average man and woman, who are divorced for trivial cause, are more faithful during their temporary union, than

are those who do not believe in divorce at all. It leads to greater looseness in the relations of the unmarried, since it lowers the high ideal which should be entertained of the sacredness of the marriage relations. In fine, it leads to the general degeneration of the moral character; just as, on the contrary, the indissolubility of marriage is one of the strongest and most effective means for the development of self-control and of mutal self-sacrifice.

Reasons such as these have made even the less thoughtful wish for greater strictness in the matter of divorce; and the right-minded are demanding a tightening of the lines. But, when will men learn the lesson which has been taught all through the history of a weak and passionate mankind, that the only way to prevent the "open-door" policy in this matter is to stand for a régime which allows divorce by no power less than the power of God Himself? When divorce is admitted for a few causes, there is the almost irresistible tendency to increase the number of grounds upon which the breaking of the matrimonial bond is

sought; the moral effects for the betterment of mankind by self-restraint are lost; the subjugation of the animal in the human compound goes by the board; individualism and egotism triumph over everything.

But, here the advocates of the freer policy, which is out of joint with even the natural law, cry out indignantly against a "rigorous cruelty" which would chain a very "angel" to a "demon incarnate." They paint a morbid picture of the innocent one, cut off from all the joys of freedom and from the satisfaction which is the right of everyone. They descant eloquently upon the advantages and good results which come from remedying a first failure by a triumphant success of love in a second, or, maybe, a third instance—and why not a tenth or a twentieth?

In many of the cases referred to, a simple separation will suffice to do away with a state of affairs which is described as beyond human endurance. Still, it must be admitted that there are circumstances in which even this alternative of separation is an insufficient palliative, and that terrible

trial must be the fate which faces some for life. But—and the answer is unhesitating from the mouth of nature itself—such pains must be borne, such trials must be faced *for the good of the race,* and must be endured with the strength won from the merciful God who allows the trial and the pain.

Hard, is it? Yes, terribly hard at times. But, there is question here of *law;* and law looks to the common good, even though the individual must suffer temporal pain and temporal loss. What would we say, if we were to see a handful of soldiers, facing fearful odds against the enemies of their country, fighting that others may be safe and that the tide of invasion may not sweep over the land that they love? Would we say: "Why not yield? Why go on fighting? Why give their own lives, to which they have a right? Why forego the enjoyment which the future holds?" Ah, no! No yielding for them. They must fight and die for their country.

If a champion of Christ were haled before a pagan tyrant and commanded to offer in-

cense upon the altar of a false god, before a foul idol of a devilish deity, would those who stand for the fullest play of individual powers and for the "right to lead one's own life," step up to him with honeyed words and counsel him to follow the way which leads to joy and pleasure and honor? "Only a few grains of incense. And you have your own life to live." They might, indeed, thus urge the hero to fail; but their inducement would be that of the Prince of darkness. No; the Christian's duty to God would require him to forego even the sweetest joys of earth, in order to be loyal to his Lord, whose law rules the universe. Misfortune and sorrow and human passion and human wrong and human injustice do not absolve a man from his duty to the Most High. And this is the answer to the sentimentalists.

Still, these trials which call for heroism in their endurance are the lot, not of the many, but of the few, who must bear up that all may be safe. These soldiers guard the innocents of the fireside: these martyrs suffer for the majesty of divine right. And

their painful sacrifice tends to the security and peace and forbearance and fidelity and love of family and home, where one man and one woman are joined in the sacredness of love, until death do them part.

This is the ideal of the married state, as viewed in the light of reason itself: one man and one woman joined in the sacredness of love, until death do them part. Marriage is, and should be, a something sacred: it has always been more or less associated with religion. Without religion there is no morality and none of the spirit of self-sacrifice which is necessary for the true elevation of the marital relation. But, alas! the history of a sinful race shows how far the mass of mankind wandered away from the influence of sound religion, and how there was no religion, save the religion of Christ, that ever succeeded in building an impassable barrier against the onrushing tide of human depravity.

In the evil days of which history tells the mournful tale men fell away from the unity of marriage to such an extent, that to a greater or less degree the intolerable union

of many husbands with one wife was found in some cases, and the union of many wives with one husband grew to such terrible proportions, that almost all the ancient nations were defiled by it, save Greece and Rome.

But, among these last the public morality was debauched by the fearful prevalence of concubinage and by the detestable immorality of the conquered East. Like a festering canker, wild licentiousness ate into the heart of the nation's manhood, aye, and of its womanhood, whose unspeakable orgies terrified from marriage many who would otherwise have entered upon it. Divorce became such an ordinary thing, that marriage was looked upon as a passing experience, and women counted the years, not by the consuls, but by the number of their marriages. And like the slimy trail of the serpent of hell, infidelity, as a common occurrence, defiled a debased society.

With the disappearance of two of the sacred characters of marriage—its unity by polygamy and infidelity, and its indissolubility by divorce—there followed the van-

ishing of its fecundity, so that the old pagan rulers were faced with the problem of the dying out of the race. In the midst of this ineffable maelstrom of evil, woman's lot, as it always is when the sanctity of marriage is touched, was even more deplorable than that of man. If woman is not hallowed, she sinks down and down into the abyss, at the foot of which is the bottomless pit. In this mad chaos of a sex reviled she was left to weep and mourn, or, worse yet, to shriek the demoniac laugh which seemed to exult in her own debasement.

The chosen people of God were not exempt from all the evils that rioted around them. From the pagan peoples, in the midst of whom they lived, the Jews took the practice of polygamy. Let it be noted, there is no question here of the plurality of wives in the case of the patriarchs, which was with the special dispensation of God for the increase of the race and with the protection of God's particular Providence; but of polygamy like that of the pagans and of divorce in its fulness of evil. These pagan defections were rampant among the

Jews: and God was, as it were, forced to permit them, least worse should come. To the Jews who asked the Christ, "Why, then, did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away?" [1] our blessed Savior replied: "Because Moses by reason of the *hardness of your heart* permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." [2]

Of a certain truth, it was not so from the beginning; and Christ, the Reedeemer, brought marriage back to the position which it had had in the designs of God. He reasserted its sacred character; He reaffirmed its holy prerogatives; nay, He offered a remedy to the fatal weakness of human nature, by raising the natural contract to the dignity of a sacrament.[3]

As we know from divine revelation, when the Lord God gave to Adam the woman who was to be his wife and the mother of the race of men, Adam said under divine inspiration: "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . . Wherefore a

[1] Matt. xix, 7.
[2] Matt. xix, 8.
[3] Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv.—Denz. n. 969.

man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh."[1] And our divine Savior, in recalling marriage to its former dignity, referred the last of these words to God Himself who made man; and He more clearly declared the unity of marriage, when He Himself added: "Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh."[2] The indissolubility of the bond between the two partners of the matrimonial union He confirmed, when He said: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."[3]

And as the eyes of the Master scanned the sad record of the past and saw the havoc which the wild licentiousness of unbridled passion had wrought in God's institution, His love prompted Him to give a divine means to bring about the complete sacredness of marriage. He raised the very contract of matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, signifying and conferring grace—both the sanctifying grace of God and the

[1] Gen. ii, 23, 24.
[2] Matt. xix, 4-6.
[3] Matt. xix, 6.

right to the actual graces which are needed, in order that the burden of the dignity of marriage may be nobly borne and the duties of the state may be heroically fulfilled.

The sacramental nature of Christian marriage is intimated in the well known passage of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. There the Apostle exhorts the wife to be subject to her husband, as the Church is to Christ; and he urges the husband to love his wife, as Christ loves the Church, His Spouse. And he continues: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a *great sacrament;* but I speak in Christ and in the Church." [1]

The Christian marriage signifies the union of Christ with His Spouse, the Church; and this union is effected by sanctifying grace, according to the word of the Apostle, "Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it: that he might sanctify it." [2] This signifying of the union

[1] Ephes. v, 31, 32.
[2] Ephes. v. 25, 26.

of Christ with the Church marriage has from God's ordinance, confirmed by our Lord. But, marriage not only signifies this union of grace: it also produces this grace in the souls of men.

This we deduce not solely from the words of St. Paul, "This is a great sacrament." For, "sacrament" in the text does not of necessity mean what we understand by a sacramental rite. Still, according to the original Greek text, to Paul marriage is a "mystery," which signifies a mystic sign; and this mystic sign is a "great one, in Christ and in the Church." The Apostle at least intimates that the sign is productive of grace, in so far as the marriage union of Christians is put before us as a supernatural and permanent union; and such a union postulates the habitual grace of God together with the right to actual graces. Moreover, St. Paul calls it a great mystic sign in comparison with the ceremonial rites of the Old Law, "the weak and needy elements," [1] which conferred no grace upon the recipients; and the chief reason for its

[1] Gal. iv, 9.

preëminent greatness is found in the production of grace.

However, if only intimated by St. Paul, the production of grace by the Christian marriage contract is clearly put before us by the Fathers of the Church and by the whole of Christian tradition. St. Augustine places marriage on the same level and in the same category as Holy Orders and Baptism, both of which undoubtedly produce grace.[1] To St. Ambrose Christian marriage is a sacrament, which binds one with God by the bonds of grace.[2] Tertullian asserts that divine grace and its protection are given in marriage, and in no other sense than this can we understand his eloquent words: "How can we describe the happiness of those marriages which the Church ratifies, the sacrifice strengthens, the blessing seals, the angels publish, the heavenly Father propitiously beholds?" [3]

The sacramental nature of Christian marriage is, if possible, even more clearly revealed in the liturgies and sacramentaries

[1] *De bono conjugii*, c. xxiv; *De nuptiis et concup.* i, 10.
[2] *Epist.* xlii 3; *Epist.* xix, 7; *De Abraham*, i. 7.
[3] *Ad Uxorem*, ii, 9.

of the different Eastern and Western churches.[1] Then too, there is the argument of prescriptive right, which has been referred to often before and which is equally valid here. The consent of the schismatical and heretical Oriental churches from the ninth century (the time of the schism) and from the fifth (the time of the cutting away of Nestorians, Monophysites, Copts, Jacobites and the like), is an irrefragable argument in favor of Christian tradition, going back to the Apostles of Christ and to the Savior Himself.

Entirely founded, then, and standing on the firm basis of Holy Scripture and on solid arguments showing divine revelation, is the infallible utterance of the Church, declaring that matrimony is really and truly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, that it was instituted by Christ our Lord, and that it confers the grace which it signifies.[2]

Holy, indeed, is the moment, when two persons, filled with love and (please God!)

[1] For this and for further citations from the Fathers, see *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. ix, p. 709.

[2] Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv—can. 1.—Denz. n. 971.

with reverence for each other, stand before the altar of God to plight their troth; when with the confidence of young hearts they joyfully look into the future and see it holding their two lives, joined into a sweet unity; when each takes the other as husband or wife "to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health until death do" them "part."[1] Holy always by the ordinance of God, the marriage contract is now by the merits of Christ a sacred sacrament. It is the Consecration of Love, and mirrors forth the loving union of Christ with His Spouse, the Church, and produces the grace which is the bond of that love.

It is to be well noted and tenaciously remembered, that between Christians the very matrimonial contract itself is the sacrament of matrimony. As a correlative consequence, marriage amongst Christians is placed *exclusively* in the hands of the Church, in all that touches its essence and its sacredness. The State may not intrude within the precints of religious holiness:

[1] Marriage ceremony.

it may only regulate the *civil* effects that flow from the sacrament.

To do otherwise is to arrogate to itself a power which Christ our Lord reserved for His Church, and to expose itself to disastrous consequences. Naturally, it is not to be expected that a State which does not look upon Christ's religion as the only way to salvation, will recognize this disposition of things which God has made. But, even in the face of opposition, the Church, with the realization of the truth of her heaven-bestowed charge, must vindicate this right as her own. If, as may be, the State is free from moral guilt in not yet recognizing the prerogative of Christ's Spouse, it is not exempt, for all that, from the evil effects which follow upon unauthorized intrusion. And if the State assume into itself the right of undoing the ordinance of the Eternal and of putting asunder those whom God has joined together, it must reap the whirlwind where it has sown the storm; and the failures of mere nature show what the ravages will be. If, even in the ignorance which excuses from guilt, it acts against

the family, it will not go unscathed. For, as a close observer (Bonald) once remarked with a truth which has been borne out by the sad lessons of history, "when the State destroys the family, the family avenges itself and ruins the State."

So, then, the plighting of the troth of two Christian souls is the sacrament which is the consecration of love. Its effects are those that were intended by the love of the Redeemer.

The unity of marriage is henceforth fixed with the sanction of the Savior, who bled upon the cross that He might sanctify unto Himself a Spouse worthy of His love, pure and unspotted and glorious.[1] Marriage is to be the union of two persons, with the essential equality which belongs to the brothers and sisters of Christ. Christ Jesus is and can be but one; and the Church, which is His mystic body and His Spouse, is and can be but one. And hence, the union which mirrors forth this mysterious union between Christ and His Bride, must be a union between one man and one woman.

[1] Cf. Ephes. v, 27.

By reason of the sacramental nature of the contract, the bond of marriage is so sacredly indissoluble, that a valid marriage between Christians, once consummated, can never be dissolved by any power on earth, and will never be dissolved by God Himself. Will the union of Christ with His living Bride, the Church, which stands for regenerated humanity, ever cease to be? Never. And until that Christ will be separated from His Church, the consummated marriage-union of His faithful ones will never have an end on earth "till death do them part."

One of the glories of the dear old Church is, that at the precept of the Master she has stood for the dignity of woman, which depends upon safeguarding the sanctity of the marriage bond; that she has opposed the might of the great ones of earth; that she has defended the holiness and indissolubility of marriage. She has faced a Philip Augustus of France, a Henry VIII of England, the Protestant Princes of Germany; and to all their urgings she has replied that she must obey God rather than

men. A marriage non-existent from the beginning, she declares to be such. In certain cases and for grave reasons she can break the bond before the consummation of the marriage relation. But, a valid marriage between Christians, once consummated, she must guard as she guards the law of God. Even to save a nation, she cannot prove false to her commission from the Savior of the world. So, to the instincts of the flesh she opposes the rights of God and the dignity of the immortal soul; and she places the interests of the moral and social good of the race on a higher plane than some selfish interests of the egotism of the individual. She defends the Sacrament of Marriage, which is the consecration of love, and she saves the world from untold horrors; for, where the sacramental dignity of matrimony, with all that it involves, is lost sight of, the orgies of a pagan past gradually creep in and do their work of destruction.

Besides these effects and besides the sanctifying grace by which the Sacrament hallows the souls of the recipients, it also

gives the right to the actual graces which are needed for the holy fulfillment of the duties of the married state.

Unfortunately, all is not perfection since Christianity gave Christ's message to the world. The defects, the vices, the abuses, which spring forth from the feebleness and fickleness and egotism of poor human nature, have not all been eradicated. Still, there have been given to the world a standard of sweeter modesty, an elevation of the principles of morality, and a supernatural support for weak and faltering wills. If the Christian pair show their good will, and if, where nature totters, they turn to God for help, they will be given all the aids of heaven which are necessary for bearing the glorious burden of their dignity, and for the devotedness of self-sacrifice, which makes for personal happiness and for the general weal.

Thus assisted, they will bear and forbear with each other; they will bring into the world those little ones who are to be the people of the City of God in heaven, and who on earth will be the solace of friends,

the mainstay of society, the pride of the Church, the children of God. They will give to these darlings of theirs the Christian education which is the birth-right of the children of the Father who is in heaven. And from the homes, sanctified by the graces which flow from the Sacrament of Marriage upon the faithful stewards of a sacred trust, there will go forth sons and daughters, who will reverence and love father and mother, and who on the last day and before the throne of God will rise up and call them blessed.

This, then, is the Sacrament of Christian Marriage—the natural contract raised to the dignity and efficacy of a sacramental rite of Christ Jesus, to effect what He intended when He gave it to His dear ones. It founds a state of life which, according to the original designs of God, calls for unity and indissolubility. It gives to these properties a more permanent and holy character, and it bestows the grace of God by typifying the very union of the Incarnate Son of God with His Church. It blesses the earth with a nobility which is

a prelude to that glory of soul in the mansions of the Father, for which it prepares the elect of God.

And so, we have gone over each of the seven sacraments, which the blessed Savior of mankind left in the keeping of His Church to apply to the souls of men the merits and the fruits of His terrible Passion. As was said right in the beginning when we began our considerations, our purpose in going over these sacred means of grace was to help ourselves to a better understanding and a deeper appreciation of these divine helps against our faltering weakness; to a correspondingly greater love for the loving Lord who has so blessed the world; and to a more whole-souled loyalty of service to Him whose love deserves so much from us.

Has that purpose been realized? Please God, it has! And please God too! it will prove its realization in the lives that we lead. In all our reflections upon the Sacraments, the cross of Christ stands out before us against the angry skies. For,

from that cross flow all the graces which come to us through the channels of the seven-fold gift of love. All through our lives, let us keep close to that suffering and dying Christ. Let every sigh of His sorrowing heart, every pang of His desolate spirit, every pain of His tortured body, every insult to His outraged majesty tell over in the depths of our sympathetic souls the old, old story of His love.

And in return, He shall have—what? Our thanks for the benefits of His divine bounty? Yes. Our sorrow for the sins which have outraged His affection and flouted His tenderness? Yes; all that. And He shall have the faithful service of loyal hearts and the honest love of upright souls; and the striving for the better and the nobler things; and the spreading of His Kingdom here on earth; and, God grant it! the eternal adoration of ransomed ones through the endless ages of joy-flooded union with Him in the home of the Father, whither He has gone to prepare a dwelling for us.

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